Class BT101

Book .S2

1908

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND.
Crown 8vo, cloth, with diagrams, 7*s.* 6*d.*

THE SPRINGS OF CHARACTER.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

NERVES IN DISORDER.
A PLEA FOR RATIONAL TREATMENT.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

NERVES IN ORDER;
OR, THE MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

ITS MEANING AND ITS POWER

BY

A. T. SCHOFIELD, M.D.

"Αυξανομενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει του Θεοῦ"

Col. i. 10 (Revised Greek Text)

NEW YORK

FUNK AND WAGNALLS COMPANY

44–60 EAST 23RD STREET

1908

BT101
.S2
1908

120759
'08

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, PRINTERS, WOKING AND LONDON.

TO THE

ANGEL

OF MY LIFE

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

AMONG the many kindly criticisms of the first edition, one that deserves special notice is with regard to there being no notice of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the book, or it being named as a means of knowing God. I cannot see my way to insert what I would wish in the text; but should like to say here how much I am indebted for the suggestion; for in St. Luke xxiv. 31, 35, the very word γῑνώσκω is used, and there can be no doubt that in the feast of remembrance the soul meets God in a very special way, and the true "knowledge of God" is learned.

A. T. SCHOFIELD.

HARLEY STREET, W.

PREFACE

THIS short treatise is an attempt to show that the personal knowledge of God is the true secret of happiness; and that a real trust in and acquaintance with the Heavenly Father, transforms both spirit and life for him who possesses it. The book, therefore, is necessarily concerned with Christian life rather than with Christian work; with the character rather than with the career.

The personal knowledge of God of which it speaks is, however, but a means to an end; and so far from leading to selfishness must, in proportion as it is enjoyed, fill the soul with that Divine

love and compassion that ever seeks the good of others and the glory of God.

It is obvious how unworthy the language must be of such a theme; but it is hoped that the reader, who may begin as a critic of defects which are human, will end as a worshipper of a perfection which is Divine.

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTORY 1

Christians and Christianity—Cure for faith in China—Whole-hearted and half-hearted—Lukewarm faith—Cause of half-hearted practice—God is not personally known.

CHAPTER I

AGNOSTICISM 9

Meaning of words—Verbal inspiration—Two words for "knowing"—Intellectual knowledge or sight—Personal knowledge—Mental and physical sight—Thoughts and feelings—Value of feelings—"Sight" in Epistles and Gospels—Three eyes to see God—Three abstract senses—Agnostics—Atheists—Nature and Scripture—Both reveal God—Nature does not reveal much—The Unknown God—God fully revealed in Scripture—Many Bible students don't know God—Agnostics and idolaters—Idolatry easy—No true God apart from Scripture—Careless neglect of to-day—Goetze's Academy picture—All shall yet know God.

CHAPTER II

PAGE

CHRISTIAN AGNOSTICS . . . 29

Four classes of men—1. God unknown—agnostics and atheists—2. God known through Nature — 3. God known in the Scripture—4. God known personally — Many Christians do not know God—Personal knowledge not a question of intellect—Danger of mere intellectual knowledge of God — It leads to idolatry—Christian "idols"—True knowledge leads to humility — How we treat artificial gods—How God is dishonoured—Contrast between God and idols—Current Christian expressions—Uttered without shame—Never heard where God is known—All Agnostics apart from revelation—All our thoughts of God are wrong—The living Christian longs for the living God—We have all manufactured false gods—A short catechism—Our language the measure of our knowledge—Language partly dependent on our state—Illustration of child and father—Artificial "spiritual" communion—The concept of the true God is rare—What is eternal life?

CHAPTER III

HOW TO KNOW GOD . . . 51

Two words for "knowing"—How to know God—The illumination of heart and soul—Feelings and thoughts—Light from Sophocles—Iole and Hercules—We enter God's presence—We are "content" when we know God—"Now mine eye seeth Thee"—Our words and acts change—Effect of God's presence—Four aspects of God—Anglo-Indian children—Faith, medita-

PAGE

tion, and prayer—Eating the words. Assimilation—Waiting on God—Character of prayer changed—"Apprehend" and "comprehend"—The living God—Personal knowledge implies life—What love is—The true God—True means real—God is the great reality—Our knowledge shown by our words—The God who is love—Rest and peace—The love of God cannot be told—The language of experience—The delight of the home circle—The Agnostic period—Intellectual knowledge of God—Backsliding—Personal acquaintance with God—The tenderness of God's love—God's two detectives—The Psalms speak to the heart—Personal testimony—The deepest knowledge of all—Christ's knowledge of God—Few possess this deepest knowledge—God changes the character—The language changes—We shall fully know God—The most wonderful prayer of St. Paul—To know God is heaven begun—Strong language of St. Peter—The fullest knowledge of God *may be* enjoyed now—Personal knowledge leads to greater intelligence.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE OF GOD'S CHILD . . 85

Three powers of evil—the world, the flesh, and the devil—The story of Israel—Canaan is not heaven—The wilderness and Canaan—The tired pilgrim—The child at home—*In* Christ Jesus—Seated in heavenly places—Rest, safety, and enjoyment—A pleasant Christian—No murmurs in heavenly places—The twofold life of God's child—We have absolute defence against evil—Surrounded by the peace of God—Christ was misunderstood—Peace depends on position—Shirt of chain-mail—Growth from knowledge of

PAGE

God—Change of character—Change of language —Harmony in all the being—Effect on physical health—Liberty results from the knowledge of God —Amateur law-makers—A fence and a bridle for horses and mules—Christians who keep time—What is the right time?—God's chronometer—Christians and Waterbury watches—Self-winding watch—The Christian's home-life—Living in lodgings and at home—Picture of a man who lives with God—Socrates in the "Phædrus" of Plato—Thoughts on God—The soul and its wings—The oyster and its shell—Character changed in seven ways—1. The mind is changed—The mind casts a shadow—Our minds are like ferments—Starch changed into sugar—To know God is to be a blessing—Virtue goes out unconsciously—2. The desires are changed—Not "what," but "why"—"Giving up" is no use—3. The manners are changed—The manners of a friend of God—Sweet reasonableness—4. The pursuits are changed —5. The heart is content—The sight of God changes all—6. The man is conquered—No battle is possible—No fight where God is known—7. The thoughts are changed—God the new centre of thought.

CHAPTER V

THE WALK OF GOD'S CHILD . . 123

The dim light of Enoch's world—The thoughts of Enoch—The man who walked with God—History of Enoch—Enoch pleased God—Testimony to Christ—Private life at Nazareth—Why God spoke at Christ's baptism—Public and private life—Tablet at Victoria University—Christians can please God—Inward consciousness of God's favour—Conditions of Enoch's life —What walking with God means—It is easy for us to walk with God—Story of Nicholas Her-

PAGE

man—His thoughts of God—How to go to God —How to converse with God—How to live with God—The oratory in the heart—God in business and daily life—The kitchen the gate of heaven—How to walk before God—How to be always happy.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUBLIME IN SUFFERING . . 139

The school of suffering—An almost impossible injunction—Current ideas of conduct in suffering —Same joy in heaven as in suffering—Our thoughts are not God's thoughts—Various ways of rejoicing—Three qualities of Christians—Lead, silver, and gold—Character of true scholars—Gold in the furnace—No condolence needed—Incandescent light in suffering—Trust is not knowledge—Intelligence in God's ways—The destiny of Christians—Kings and priests—Great training for high destinies—Sufferings for our own good—Story of two nurses—The standpoint is everything—The value of true insight—The blessed fruits of tribulation—The hardness of petty worries—The defence against small ills—Bearing the suffering of others—Does suffering result from lack of faith—Evils of the doctrine when unduly pressed — Christ bore our sicknesses in His life—Two evils that result—The health-giving value of true religion—Tribulation includes sickness.

CHAPTER VII

TO THE AGES OF AGES . . 161

The apotheosis of humanity—The most wonderful epistle in the Bible—Different horizons—

The materialist's horizon — A more extended view—Christian horizons—Millennial horizon—The furthest limit outside Ephesians—The black depths in the heavens—The words bend under their weight of meaning—Grace and Wisdom are Light and Love—Manifold or chromatic wisdom —The glory of God's grace—"Christus Consummator"—True evolution—Functions of a spiritual body—Christ not recognised—The Head of all Creation — Conformed to Christ — The riches of God's grace — We shall make known God's love—Truth like fairy tales—We are to represent God—We are to reveal God's wisdom —To all eternity—Glory without end—We are living pictures of the grace of God—The transparent cube the figure of the Church—Our high calling—To walk worthy of this great vocation—Powers of the world to come—These powers not for use now—We flower in the garden—Wait, till then—Summary—Result of the knowledge of God—The love of God will never cease—The knowledge of God shall yet fill all.

INTRODUCTORY

INTRODUCTORY

THE average Christian life often fails to commend Christianity. One can hardly say that the bearing of religious people as a whole constitutes a powerful argument for the faith. Indeed they are sadly too often quoted as stumbling-blocks in the inquirer's path; and many unbelievers protest (not wholly unjustly) that their mental attitude is the result of a careful contemplation of the habits and lives of professing Christians.

Christians and Christianity.

A leading Chinese nobleman, whose young son had embraced the Christian faith in China, is said to have sent

Cure for faith in China.

him to Oxford for a course of theology as an antidote; after a two years' course he returned "cured" believing in nothing. Others in Japan are said to have found the same result. These stories are not incredible.

Indignant apologists may point with pride to many noble, Christ-like men, whose whole lives are consistent with the faith they profess; and there are, especially amongst the humble, hundreds whose lives adorn their profession. But all this does not alter the fact, that the charge in the main is true. The half-hearted policy of present-day Christians in trusting their God with a half-trust, and believing in their Scriptures with a half-faith, has led to their being half-and-half all round, and whole-hearted in nothing.

Whole-hearted and half-hearted.

You see in the world the gambler absorbed in bridge, the sportsman in

shooting, the golfer in the links, the racing man in the turf, the society woman in fashion, honestly and whole-heartedly; but where is the Christian who is absorbed in Christianity?—to whom the fact of God is the greatest fact, the truth of the Scriptures the greatest truth, the love of the Divine the all-absorbing passion?

And yet the Christian faith in its noble simplicity, in its divine magnificence, deserves a far different treatment and is worthy of a different following.

A whole-hearted belief in God and the Bible would not only result in a worthy testimony to the Christian faith, but would bring untold joy to the hearts and lives of believers themselves.

Lukewarm water, half-hearted faith, hedging and trimming, sitting on the fence, are one and all descriptions of

Lukewarm faith.

conditions and policies that bring neither credit nor pleasure to their followers, nor even possess the safety for which they are adopted.

If the Lord be God, follow Him—wholly.

As for me and my house, we WILL *serve the Lord*—wholly.

The whole-hearted Christian says of his faith as Ruth of Naomi: *God do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me* (Ruth i. 17). Death of course does part the believer from his faith; for then, and not till then, is faith changed to sight.

Cause of half-hearted practice.

The cause, doubtless, for this half-hearted practice is largely the bondage, the narrow ruts and grooves, in which so many Christians move. There is abundant formalism, and a correct attitude, but no warmth, no heat, no true liberty of the Spirit of God. It is for this that Faber's lovely hymn (p. 8)

yearns and longs. It is this that is the supreme need of Christianity to-day. In reading this, an earnest minority will of course protest that the words are not true of them; and this we gladly own. We are speaking in broad terms of the Christian world at large. There are, as we have said, everywhere to be found whole-hearted Christians.

God is not personally known.

My hope, then, is that I may be able to point out the real reason of this general condition, which lies deeper than any I have yet suggested. God is the God of freedom and of love, and of breadth and depth, and of all wisdom; and it is because this God is not as a rule *personally* known in His true relationship by the bulk of Christian people, that lives are what they are. I am persuaded that a personal knowledge of the living God makes a living Christian, and a heart in tune

with the Infinite can strike no discordant note in its faith or practice.

We will therefore consider together what this personal knowledge of God means, and how it is to be obtained.

AGNOSTICISM

Oh for freedom, for freedom in worshipping God,
For the mountain-top feeling of generous souls,
For the health, for the air, of the hearts deep and broad,
Where grace not in rills but in cataracts rolls!

Nothing honours our Lord like the thirst of desire,
Nor possesses the heart so completely with Him;
For it burns the world out with the swift ease of fire,
And fills life with good works till it runs o'er the brim.

For the heart only dwells, truly dwells with its treasure,
And the languor of love captive hearts can unfetter;
And they who love God cannot love Him by measure,
For their love is but hunger to love Him still better.

God loves to be longed for, He loves to be sought,
For He sought us Himself with such longing and love;
He died for desire of us, marvellous thought!
And He yearns for us now to be with Him above.

F. W. Faber.

CHAPTER I

AGNOSTICISM

Meaning of words.

IN writing of such sacred subjects as concern us here, it is essential that the meaning of all important words should be accurately defined. Even in ordinary discussion this is necessary; how much more, therefore, when we speak about the things of God!

Verbal inspiration.

Many of us may not have noticed that one of the great marvels of Scripture is that it can express so much as it does of the revelation of God in the words of men. It is this fact that makes it difficult for me to conceive

of any inspiration that is not verbal, for it is on the very words used that the accurate expression of the Divine thought depends.

I am convinced that no reverent mind can study the Greek Testament without seeing the truth of this on every page. The difficulty of writing the thoughts of Heaven, even in a language so rich in expressing shades of meaning as the Greek, is perhaps best appreciated by those missionary pioneers who are constantly translating the New Testament into fresh tongues. These translations into the crude dialects of savages are beset with almost insuperable difficulties.

Much of the force of the Greek is lost even in our Revised Version, for it is well known that the English language is very poor in some respects.

Two words for "knowing."

Take, for instance, in connection with our subject, the verb "to know." For

this we have, in English, but one word; whereas in other languages there are at least two; the right understanding of these two is essential to grasping the arguments of this book.

In Greek, Latin, French, and German, οιδα (*oida*) *scio*, *savoir*, and *wissen* refer to one sort of knowledge, while γιγνωσκω (*ginosko*), *cognosco*, *connaitre*, and *kennen* mean another. Οιδα, which is the perfect of the disused ειδω (*eido*), really means to see (but οραω [*orao*] is also used), and refers primarily to physical sight, and with the present tense would be connected directly with *videre* in the Latin and *voir* in the French; but in the perfect, οιδα, "I have seen," *i.e.*, "I know," meaning "I understand" it, is better connected with *scio* and *savoir*, referring to an intellectual perception by the psychic eye of what is impressed on the mental retina. Οιδα, which refers primarily to things and facts rather

Intellectual knowledge or sight.

than to persons, may range from a passing glimpse to the most profound intellectual understanding.

Personal knowledge.

The second four words, headed by γιγνωσκω, are 'to learn, to know, to come to a knowledge,' which is gradual and increasing, and refer to personal knowledge, or knowledge of persons rather than things. This Greek word often implies relationship, heart knowledge, and a certain familiarity.

Mental and physical sight.

Returning to ειδω (οιδα), the two visions, mental and physical (both of them differing from personal knowledge), are very interesting. We can say, looking at a photo of a person whom we do not know, "I see what he is like." After some dealings with him we can again say, "I see what he is like," referring this time to mental and not to bodily vision; and yet in neither case may we know him personally at all, and so we can say, "I know (οιδα) him, and

yet I do not know (γιγνωσκω) him at all." [1]

Thoughts and feelings.

Before leaving the subject one other distinction of interest and value may

[1] The difference between οιδα (*oida*) and γιγνωσκω (*ginosko*) is worth considering a little further, as follows:—

Οιδα is immediate perception.

Γινωσκω is gradual knowledge.

The genius sees at once (οιδα).

The scientific man comes to know (γινωσκω).

Οιδα is to know by reflective thought.

Γινωσκω, to know by observation, and implies an active relation, a self-reference of the knower to the object known.

Matt. xxv. 12, *I know* (οιδα) *you not, i.e.*, officially as virgins you are in no relation to me.

Matt. vii. 23, *I never knew* (γινωσκω) *you, i.e.*, personally I have never been in connection with you.

The following is a list of the passages where οιδα is applied to persons, and in the following passages clearly refers to official and not to personal knowledge: Matt. xxv. 12, xxvi. 72, 74; Mark i. 24, xiv. 68, 71; Luke iv. 34, 41, xiii. 25, 27, xxii. 34, 57, 60; John vi. 42, vii. 27, 28, viii. 19; Acts vii. 18; Gal. iv. 8; 1 Thess. iv. 5; 2 Thess. i. 8; Titus i. 16; Heb. viii. 11, x. 30.

be made between the two sorts of knowledge of which I have spoken. That connected with the intellect (ειδω οιδα) leads to thoughts, that understood by γιγνωσκω leads to feelings. This, of course, is obvious if we connect the former knowledge with the head and the latter with the heart.

Four passages remain to consider.

John i. 26, 31, 33, *Ye know not—I knew him not—I knew him not.* A careful consideration of this passage leads me to believe that John was not referring to his personal knowledge of his cousin, but his official knowledge of him as Messiah; which was not clear till the Spirit descended.

John vii. 29, viii. 55, *I know him*, and refers to Christ's knowledge of his Father, a subject so profound and beyond our grasp in criticism that we cannot analyse it.

2 Cor. xii. 2, *I knew a man in Christ.* This is difficult, and looks like personal knowledge. Οιδα may be used here, however, as it is a vision, a perception rather than an ordinary personal knowledge. I think these passages include all where ειδω is used with regard to persons; elsewhere it is either to see, or to know facts and things.

Γινωσκω and επιγινωσκω is experimental know-

Value of feelings.

Much has been written and spoken against "feelings" in connection with Christian experience; but this book is written to show their value, and to lay stress on the fact that the intellectual study of God is indeed barren if it does not produce feelings. Feelings may be associated with much ignorance. Such was the case with Mary Magdalene, who thought Christ was the gardener, but in spite of this her heart-knowledge of the Lord led to His recognition, and made her the honoured messenger to His own apostles, who had more knowledge, but less feeling.

"Sight" in Epistles and Gospels.

We may here note the interesting point that in the Gospels, when Christ was visible to the natural eye, ειδω, or οιδα, is translated "to see" 194 times, and "to know" 173 times. And in

ledge and growing personal experience which comes day by day to those who have first seen (οιδα), and known Him by faith.

the Epistles, when Christ can only be seen by the spiritual eye (*we see Jesus*, Heb. ii. 9), the word is translated "to see" only twenty times, as against "to know" 211 times. Of course there are other reasons as well for this difference.

The title of this book, "The Knowledge of God," might therefore refer to any intellectual understanding or appreciation of His character and ways (οιδα) or to a personal acquaintance with Him (γιγνωσκω), for in English only one word is possible.

Three eyes to see God.

I should like to make a remark here about mental vision before we pass on. We have two eyes by which we see man, and three by which we see God. These three are the three abstract senses—the intellectual, thought or reason; the emotional, or æsthetic feeling; and the moral sense, or conscience. As the light of the body is

the eye of the body, so is the light of the mind the eye of the mind; and thus the life common to all organic creation is in man alone of the nature of light (of reason, of emotion, and of morality), by which he can see God with head, and heart, and conscience. It is in this way that *the life is the light of men* (John i. 4).

Three abstract senses.

These three senses are alike in their inscrutable origin. They are all arbitrary in character, hence we have axioms and self-evident propositions for the intellect; we have a sense of beauty that rules and guides us, and not we it; and conscience, the moral sense is often a veritable tyrant, speaking to us with authority, and often torturing us if we do not listen and obey. The origin of all this authority is unaccountable apart from God, who is thus stamped upon our very being.

Having cleared the way by this

explanation of the two words used for knowledge, we may now turn to the title of this chapter, "Agnosticism."

Agnostics.

The word Agnostic was coined by Professor Huxley, in 1869, to describe those who held that there was no knowledge save through phenomena, *i.e.*, material proofs.

Atheists.

Those thus styled therefore professed not to know at all whether God exists or not. They thus differed on the one hand from atheists, who, exalting their ignorance into knowledge, boldly said there is no God, because they did not know Him; on the other hand they differed also from the Athenians, who came to the opposite conclusion, and declared that there was a God, though they also did not know Him.

Now as the existence of God cannot ever be *proved* by material phenomena apart from revelation, all men are by

nature agnostics or idolaters; that is, they either recognise that they know nothing about God, or they worship some projection or invention of their own minds which is without value or authority.

But *forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God*, who would draw us all into the nearer and dearer relation of sons, He could not and would not leave us so—hence a revelation was needed and provided.

Nature and Scripture.

So God has revealed Himself, as we believe, in two ways—in Nature, and in Scripture, and both of these give us truth concerning Him.

We read about those who have studied (and despised) the book of Nature *only*, that they *hold the truth in unrighteousness* (Rom. i. 18). And as to Nature, we are told that *That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the*

invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal person and Godhead (Rom. i. 19, 20).

Both reveal God.

Thus, though Nature is undoubtedly debased and defaced by man, and has far departed from its pristine beauty, and though the Scriptures too have suffered through the imperfections of the human instruments and human speech and defective translations, both undoubtedly contain and proclaim the truth as to God.

The man who reads either of these two books—the Scriptures or the book of Nature—can no longer be a true Agnostic, but only such in a secondary sense.

Nature does not reveal much.

Those who read the book of Nature only, have at any rate before them God's *eternal power and Godhead.* The figure that is thus visible is very

much like that of a man wrapt up from head to foot in a cloak, which, while it reveals his outline, conceals his features; and thus Nature has not inaptly been called "the garment of the Lord."

The Unknown God.

The Greeks, too, at Athens who built that altar to the "Unknown God" had studied the book of Nature, and, recognising this, St. Paul led them on to further knowledge in the light of a fuller revelation.

One can discern, even through a cloak, that the figure is strong, broad, and majestic, although the finer features of character be hidden and the man himself quite unknown. Those who only discern this much regarding God may be called Agnostics in a secondary sense, and are actually termed so in 1 Cor. xv. 34 and 1 Thess. iv. 5: *Some have not the knowledge of God* (lit. "are Agnostics"), and *Even as the Gentiles which know not God* (*i.e.*, Agnostics).

But this outward revelation or knowledge (οιδα) may be carried much further, and yet the Person remain unknown.

God fully revealed in Scripture.

With the fuller revelation of Scripture we see God as we cannot see Him in Nature, for although the cloak largely covers Him still in the Old Testament, it is dropped in the New: and we see revealed *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* We discern His holiness, wisdom, love, pity, compassion, justice, and many other attributes; and yet, although we may study the Divine thus closely, we may still in the deepest sense not know (γιγνωσκω, *ginosko*) God.

For example, our king's person is familiar to many thousands of his subjects, and a very large number know the leading traits of his character. The sound of his voice may be as familiar to our ears as his appearance to our eyes, and yet we may not know him at all.

In the same way there are many

familiar with the book of Nature and the Bible, who have all the knowledge embraced by the words οιδα (*oida*), *scio*, *savoir*, and *wissen*, who are still wholly without that intimate simple personal knowledge of God implied by the words, γιγνωσκω (*ginosko*), *cognosco*, *connaitre* and *kennen;* and it is of this latter personal knowledge alone that I write here.

Many Bible students don't know God.

One thing I should like to emphasise before I pass on. I have pointed out that *naturally* a man (apart from revelation) must be an agnostic or an idolater; the former is, however, by far the better position of the two, though the latter is the more common. An idolater worships the conception of a deity simply formed by his own mind, and these projections of the imagination differ, of course, one from another, and the Pantheon becomes as large as it is worthless. It is so easy for us uncon-

Agnostics and idolaters.

Idolatry easy.

sciously to shape the Unseen according to our own characteristics, and make it the embodiment of what we think just and right; and then bow down and worship it.

In Job we read, after a series of denunciations, *This is the place of him who knows not God* (Job xviii. 21). And if such be his fate, surely he who invents a false God deserves a worse.

What we all need in these matters is more humility and reverence, and a better realisation of the vast impassable gulf that separates the finite from the Infinite, save as it has been bridged by Christ, and illumined by revelation.

No true God apart from Scripture.

We must clearly see that the only right conception of the true God is to be reached by study of Nature and Scripture, without addition from our own imaginations, which at best can only picture shadows of ourselves, it may be larger or smaller than the original.

The most common attitude to-day in Christian countries towards God, however, is that of a careless neglect. We no longer get the vigorous materialism of Huxley that reasons Him out of court; still less the blatant atheism of Paine and Voltaire.

Careless neglect of to-day.

Even the assertions of Herbert Spencer as to the Unknowable are now felt to be rash and out of date, for how can any one really know that God *is* "unknowable," which is quite a different matter from His being unknown?

So the current attitude is well described (apart from the degrading vices named) in Rom. i. 11, *They, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God.* This indifference was well depicted in Goetze's Academy picture in 1904, "*He was despised and rejected of men*," where we see the Saviour bound to the altar of the Unknown God, with every representative of modern science, fashion,

Goetze's Academy picture.

and art carelessly passing Him by. Such a picture, whatever its merits as a painting, is of infinite pathos. How far more pathetic must the sight of the world (which still *knows not God*) be to the living Father, who has revealed to us His thoughts in the Scriptures, and even given us to see Himself in Jesus Christ!

It is an immense comfort to know that this attitude is not a final one, but that *the earth shall* (yet) *be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord* (Hab. ii. 14); and a still greater satisfaction to know that there exists now everywhere in our midst an increasing number who not only know (οιδα) what is revealed of God in Nature and Scripture, but have a personal knowledge (γνωσις) of a living Father. It is of these I would speak, and show how such wondrous knowledge is to be obtained.

All shall yet know God.

CHRISTIAN AGNOSTICS

Souls of men! why will ye scatter
  Like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts! why will ye wander
  From a love so true and deep?

For the love of God is broader
  Than the measures of men's mind;
And the Heart of the Eternal
  Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
  By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
  With a zeal He will not own.

It is God: His love looks mighty,
  But is mightier than it seems!
'Tis our Father: and His fondness
  Goes far out beyond our dreams.

If our love were but more simple,
  We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
  In the sweetness of our Lord.

F. W. FABER.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN AGNOSTICS

SO far I have spoken in general terms of the knowledge of God and tried to explain the different meanings of the word "to know," and also to consider the varieties and causes of "Agnosticism."

Four classes of men.

In this connection we may divide men into four classes:—

1. Agnostics and Atheists.

The *first class* includes all who know nothing about God whatever. Those who confess their ignorance are termed "Agnostics"; while those who call their ignorance knowledge, and because they

know not God declare that there is none, are called "Atheists." [1]

2. God known through Nature.

The *second class* are those who have learned what can be known of God from the book of Nature only. They thus know there is a God, and that He has the power of an overruling Providence. Such were the Greeks and Romans in their worship of an Unknown God. This is, of course, a great advance on Agnosticism.

3. God known in the Scripture.

The *third class* are those who are Christians, and who have not only read Nature but the Scriptures ; who have known and believed in the God and Christ of the Bible, and who have become by faith the children of God. These are a great advance on the Greeks, and have touched, as to God,

[1] *The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God,"* but he does not proclaim it ; and it is said that only apostates are atheists and publicly deny God.

the limit of intellectual knowledge described by the word οιδα (*oida*). Their hearts have also known the Saviour's love, they have believed in Him, and belong to God's family. And yet if they do not go farther they do not really know (γιγνωσκω—*ginosko*) what a Father they have got; for we shall see there are many children in the heavenly family, as there are in earthly families, who are strangers to their own Father.

4. God known personally.

Of the *fourth class* we will merely say here that they have passed this stage and personally know the wondrous Heavenly Father into whose family they have entered; the practical result being not increased salvation or hope of heaven, but different thoughts and life on earth.

At first sight it seems impossible that any who are indeed members, by faith in Christ, of the Divine family, and who

have the spirit of His Son in their hearts by which *they cry, Abba, Father* (Rom. viii. 15), can possibly be lacking in the personal, the heart knowledge (γινωσκω, *cognosco, connaitre, kennen*) of God.

Many Christians do not know God.

And yet such a condition is not only possible, but if one may judge from much of the ordinary language and ways of Christians is quite common.

Of course it would be untrue and misleading to assert that any Christians do not know God, without explaining that it is this personal knowledge (γνωσις or επιγνωσις) of which alone we speak here.

Personal knowledge not a question of intellect.

Let us note specially that this is no question of attainment. The knowledge of those who are still not acquainted with God may be very profound and broad. A Christian may be clear and sound on the Atonement, on the Fatherhood of God on the God-

head, on the Trinity, on the dispensational aspect of God, on Jehovah Elohim and El Shaddai, on the attributes of God which he may not only know but deeply admire. All this is quite possible and quite common without the personal knowledge of God Himself. In human affairs, as I have shown, this is often seen. I may study and delight in a character; I may know all the circumstances, manners, and ways of some relative whom I do not know personally at all. There is something indescribable about personal knowledge and contact that separates it entirely from any other sort of knowledge.

Danger of mere intellectual knowledge of God.

A great danger accompanies a profound intellectual knowledge coupled with an utter absence of personal acquaintance. For thus even a true Christian man may build up from this information an ideal that bears little or no resemblance to God Himself.

It is thus, with the best intentions, that false gods are frequently unwittingly made.

It leads to Idolatry.

It is worthy of remark here, that the very word "idol" is directly derived from this merely intellectual perception (οιδα and ειδω) of which I speak.

Ειδω (*eido*) means to see or perceive, or know, and ειδος (*eidos*) is an appearance or perception, and hence ειδωλον (*eidolon*) an idol, or appearance or representation; of something, mark, that is not personally known.

Those, therefore, whose knowledge of God is practically confined to what is expressed by οιδα are extremely liable, for want of personal knowledge, to represent God by some "idol," some mental projection of their own.

Christians have sometimes, in this way, many gods differing strangely one from another.

Christian "idols."

This manufacture of idols is due not

only to ignorance of God, but to what always go with it—conceit and presumption. These both disappear in the presence of the Eternal; but out of it they flourish. Even the ordinary demagogue or Socialist, however loudly he may declaim treason at his club, takes off his hat and bows in the king's presence.

These of whom we speak, however, are neither spiritual anarchists nor socialists. They are, on the contrary, loyal subjects of the King of kings, and children of God. And yet the God they worship seems partly evolved from their own consciousness, and naturally varies with each person's individuality.

To thus substitute imagination for personal knowledge is what we call presumption; though doubtless it is unconscious, and simply arises, on the one hand, from failure to grasp that

we are in absolute ignorance of God outside revelation; and, on the other, because God, though revealed, is not personally known. If our sense of our own ignorance were more profound, our knowledge of God would not be so shallow.

True knowledge leads to humility.

But all these self-made gods are dead, for no god LIVES but the true God; and the gods many and lords many that we produce are but lifeless idols, and their worship amounts to idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of anything short of the one true God, and may include even the words and doctrines of Scripture itself, as well as the forces of Nature or the visions of the mind. But oh, the dulness of idolatry, the weariness of worshipping a dead god, the lifelessness of much current Christianity! That the god we make for ourselves is really to us as an idol is clear, for we treat it as such. If it does not act as

How we treat artificial gods.

we wish or approve of, we may refuse it (temporarily) our worship; we may find fault with it, or excuse it, or apologise for it, or explain its method and acts; quite capable, in our own estimation, of sitting in judgment on Divine wisdom!

Can any one with the smallest reverence or sense of what he is, and who God must be to be God, conceive of any worshipper of the true God thus acting? I trow not. Such conduct I firmly believe does not really spring from what the spiritual state may be at the time, as some think, but from the lack of knowledge (γνωσις) of God. If one have *this*, whatever the state, such language were impossible.

How God is dishonoured.

For this idol thus unconsciously set up by good Christian people and worshipped as God is often disfigured by the reflexion of the passions of its worshippers. It may be vindictive, ignorant, or cruel. It is even supposed

to act on these lines frequently worse than a man would. And thus is God traduced and dishonoured in the house of His friends.

If we turn for one moment to Isaiah xlvi. we find a remarkable contrast between the living God and the dead idol.

Contrast between God and idols.

Of the idol and its worshippers it says: *They fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.*

Does not this describe the way we often treat our god? We set him up, worship him fitfully, we cry unto him; and do we not often feel he does not answer, nor save us out of our trouble? Let our hearts reply.

Now look at the living God. *I am God, and there is none else; I am God,*

and there is none else. Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. Here is the difference—we carry the idol, but the living God carries us. The idol neither answers nor saves. The true God hears us, and will deliver us. Let us just meditate on this chapter and ask ourselves which of these two Gods, the false or the true, is the one we really know and worship in our hearts.

Current Christian expressions

It may be that the statements I have made seem harsh and exaggerated. I wish they were so. One has but to listen to what is said, without shame, about God by earnest Christian people, and, indeed, often with the idea that they are using pious expressions. In trials, for instance, they say: "I daily pray for grace to trust Him." "We must believe that God knows best." "I

am sure God means everything for the best, even when He makes me suffer."

Then as to favours: "I hope that God will be good to us"; or, "God has been very good to us lately." Or, instead of approval, one hears more or less open murmurs, "God Almighty's ways are hard to bear." "We must submit to Him." "I wonder why God does not," etc. Or it may be doubt: "I sometimes doubt whether God," etc.; or, "I often think if God," etc. Or it may be justification: "You see, God was obliged to let," etc. Or grumbling: "I think it very hard that God," etc.

Uttered without shame.

All one can say of such expressions, many of which are current coin in Christian circles, is that they are absolutely impossible where God is *personally* known, I care not what the person's state may be. They sound so horrible, so daring, so untrue to

Never heard where God is known.

the ears in which God Himself has spoken that they show without a doubt exactly where the speaker is in relation to the living God.

I have surnamed thee, says the Lord to Cyrus, *though thou hast not known me* (Isa. xlv. 4), and the verse is very applicable to those who are called "Sons of God," and yet do not know their Father. *God is great, and we know him not* (Job xxxvi. 26) is true in the lives of many good Christians.

All Agnostics apart from revelation.

Of course, in one sense, there is nothing wonderful in this. Ignorance of all things Divine is natural to man, and we are all originally "agnostics" as to God. But desiring an object of worship, we mix up bits of revelation with much of our own ideas, and unconsciously evolve a God, of whom we dare to talk or think as I have indicated.

All our thoughts of God are wrong.

The marvel is that some can get beyond this; and it is possible for a man

to be so convinced of his ignorance as not to dare to think a thought of his own, much less say a word, about God; and to be not only content but overwhelmed with gratitude to have unfolded to him by revelation through the Spirit anything of the Divine.

It is not the ignorance, but the personal knowledge, that is the marvel, and it is to this marvel I would lead my readers; simply because I believe that here, and here alone, is to be found a joy, a rest, a peace, a fulness of life that is but little known to Christians in general, when it should be the heritage of all.

The living Christian longs for the living God.

Yet we believe the living Christian soul longs and yearns for the living God; and God longs to know His children and that they should know Him. *For I* (God) *desired the knowledge of God* (that we should know Him) *more than burnt-offerings* (Hos.

vi. 6). *The knowledge of the Holy is understanding* (Prov. ix. 10).

Before asking the question that now arises, "How can we then thus know God?" we would have the need more deeply felt, the want better understood, and the true value of the personal knowledge of God more fully apprehended.

We have all manufactured false gods.

Words have been used that are apparently harsh, but please understand they all apply to the writer, who has manufactured as many false gods as most; and it is because one has trodden this God-dishonouring path so long, that one knows it so well. Let me put my readers through a very short catechism.

A short catechism.

Do we ever doubt God's love? If truth compels us to answer "Yes," then there is a sense in which we have never known Him.

Do we ever doubt His wisdom?

"Yes"?—Then we have never personally known Him.

Do we ever murmur in heart or in word against Him? "Yes"?—Then we have never thus known Him.

Do we ever think that as His children we might have been treated better? "Yes"?—Then we have never thus known Him.

Do we ever doubt if, after all, there is a God, or that we are His children? "Yes"?—Then we have never thus known Him.

But the list might be prolonged indefinitely.

Probably by this time, and particularly after this catechism, I may have aroused in my readers a strong sense of disapproval which would be best expressed now.

Our language the measure of our knowledge.

"How," for instance, "can any one tell how much a Christian knows of God? And, after all, is not his

language about God the measure rather of his spiritual communion and state than of the extent of his knowledge? In any case, surely it is unnecessarily harsh and severe to speak of idols and idolatry."

In reply I would first remind such objectors that I have already pointed out that a man's knowledge of God can only be gauged by his language and his acts. These, when there is no deliberate deception, are, I think, a good guide; because they reveal the speaker's mind quite unconsciously.

Language partly dependent on our state

Nevertheless, I agree that language and acts do not wholly depend on knowledge, but upon our state as well; and foolish words may at times be spoken and foolish deeds done that are quite contrary to the usual words and acts. I am speaking of the normal attitude of mind, and I believe there are words and deeds

that never can be said or done by the man who personally knows God as his Father, even under exceptional circumstances.

Illustration of child and father.

Take, as illustration, a child who idolises and adores a good father. That child may get cross, or cold, or even be alienated from its father and speak foolishly; but there are things it cannot say and thoughts it cannot even think. It never really questions its father's love and wisdom, as Christians do of God, when they have no direct knowledge of Him.

Artificial "spiritual" communion.

With regard to spiritual communion with God of which we hear so much, it seems to me that what is so called is often a highly artificial and unnatural condition of soul, maintained with much difficulty and effort by a vast expenditure of time and thought, and as different as possible from the natural, easy, filial confidence that exists between a child

and its father. "Communion" may not be such a common term on the lips of those who know God best; but the reality is understood and enjoyed.

The objection as to idols is natural, for the word is harsh; but will, I am sure, be pardoned if it leads to any heart-searchings as to who the God is who is worshipped, and yet thus spoken of; and whether He is indeed the all-loving Father of Scripture or some other God—partly of our own making.

The concept of the true God is rare.

The fact remains, in spite of all objections, that God the Father, ever all love and ever all wisdom, is a concept not generally realised among Christians. And yet it is God's will that He should be known. *I know* (γιγνωσκω) *my sheep*, says the Good Shepherd, *and am known of mine* (John x. 14).

This is life eternal, says the Saviour,

that they might know (ginosko) *thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John xvii. 3).

What is eternal life?

As Westcott so beautifully says, *Eternal life is not connected with time, but with the knowledge and existence of God* (who is beyond all time). *Eternal life is a unity of infinite peace* (that springs from infinite justice) *with the energy of infinite love.*

Those who truly know this can never question, never murmur, never doubt, never think or speak evil of, never explain or apologise for God—again. My readers will say for themselves how they stand in this matter.

And so much, so very much, turns on it! Indeed, everything both in our own lives and in our relation to others depends upon our personal knowledge of God.

HOW TO KNOW GOD

Oh, how the thought of God attracts
  And draws the heart from earth,
And sickens it of passing shows
  And dissipating mirth!

The perfect way is hard to flesh;
  It is not hard to love;
If thou wert sick for want of God,
  How swiftly wouldst thou move!

A trusting heart, a yearning eye,
  Can win their way above;
If mountains can be moved by faith,
  Is there less power in love?

God only is the creature's home,
  Though rough and strait the road,
Yet nothing less can satisfy
  The love that longs for God.

Oh, utter but the name of God
  Down in your heart of hearts,
And see how from the world at once
  All tempting light departs.

F. W. Faber.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO KNOW GOD

Two words for "knowing."

I HAVE pointed out at some length the two sets of words for "knowing" in different languages, the former of which indicate knowledge of the head or intellect, producing *thoughts* (οιδα, *scio*, *savoir*, and *wissen*), the latter knowledge of the heart or personal, producing *feelings* (γιγνωσκω, *cognosco*, *connaitre*, and *kennen*).

It is the personal—the heart knowledge—of which I now speak.[1] There

[1] It is not a little curious that in every passage quoted in this chapter at haphazard from the New Testament the word "to know" is

is yet an intenser, stronger word reserved for the most intimate possible personal knowledge of God vouchsafed to man, of which I will speak later on in this chapter.

How to know God.

But how are we thus to know God? We read in Proverbs ii. 4, 5, *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* There is here required the earnest desire as for hid treasure (for indeed there is no treasure to compare with this). There is in the Christian heart an aching void that longs and longs for the personal revelation of God. And this very desire to know our Father comes from that loving Father Himself: *I will give them a heart to know me* (Jer. xxiv. 7), was written of old.

found, on looking afterwards at the Greek, to be γιγνωσκω.

What a new and glorious revelation is this promise of knowledge! Few passages in the Scriptures equal in beauty and sublimity of language that which describes this illumination of heart and soul: *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. iv. 6).

The illumination of heart and soul.

It is in our hearts, not our heads, this glorious light shines. From the moment this knowledge has entered our lives we are linked evermore with the Divine; and a change begins in us as a result that progresses day by day —in the soul, in the life, in the ways. This knowledge, too, is intimately connected with *feelings*, just as that of the intellect is connected with *thoughts*. I have already pointed this out in the first chapter, and may now

Feelings and thoughts.

Light from Sophocles.

illustrate it from Sophocles in a sketch of the way in which the presence of a god was known to the princess of Attica by the change in her feelings rather than her thoughts. The passage is most remarkable.

Iole and Hercules.

O Iole, one said to the fair daughter of the King of Attica, *how did you know that Hercules was a God?* Now mark the answer. *Because I was content the moment mine eyes rested on him. He conquered, whether he stood or walked or sat.*

Just so. There is the whole story. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* We may hear from the Scriptures that God is our Father, that He is love, and that He is light, *i.e.*, perfect justice; and yet, Christians as we are and have been for many years, and despite our having filled our minds with the intellectual knowledge of God, we may

have to be brought back to the first elements of truth, and have to confess (oh! happy hour when we do) that we have never yet believed these wondrous words in our heart of hearts —but that from this moment never, never can we doubt them again.

We enter God's presence.

And now comes the crowning wonder, for the very moment that we thus truly believe, we find ourselves at once in the actual presence of God, it may be for the first time; and, like Israel, *Israel shall cry, My God, we know thee* (Hos. viii. 2), we cry "My God and my Father!" We knew God is God first by faith, but now we know by experience, by feeling. Like Iole, we are "*content*" (note the word) *the moment our eyes rest upon Him.*

We are "content" when we know God.

Pause one instant here to ask, "Does this ineffable, this unmistakable, this unchangeable *content* possess my heart?"

The next experience that Iole felt was that *He conquered whether he stood, or walked, or sat.*

In like manner the soul, loving, adoring, is overcome with the most profound reverence and the deepest humility, for the meeting-place with God is ever holy ground. Indeed, so deep, so marvellous is the change, that after it is realised one seems to have crossed some gulf since yesterday. *Then* we could question, we could murmur, we could doubt, we could talk about God, this Father, without humility, without reverence. How dared we? How could we? The thought is pain to us now. *Then* we had heard with the hearing of the ear, but *now* our eyes see, and we repent in dust and ashes. Yet we *were* Christians, and good Christians too—hard workers at church and school, and well known in religious circles.

"Now mine eye seeth Thee."

Now what a difference this new perception makes in the knowledge of God! And how well we see too that we did not before know God at all. The god we knew was not the living God. We could not know *Him*, and speak and act and think as we did. The very thought were foolishness.

Our words and acts change.

Those who live thus in God's presence bear themselves as His true servants ever must, and it needs no voice of thunder to keep them humble or command their reverence; His Presence is enough. Consider what it is to the soul to be conscious of the presence of the living God. How hushed for ever are all the blasphemous thoughts, the rash, foolish, and impious words that once so defiled our hearts and lips even as Christians!

Effect of God's presence.

But in what aspects do we know this God? We may take four and briefly consider them one by one.

Four aspects of God.

They are *God our Father—The Living God—Him that is true—The love which God hath in us* (R.V.), or Fatherhood, life, truth, and love.

First, Fatherhood. *I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father* (1 John ii. 13).

Anglo-Indian children.

Now just pause and consider, and ask yourself another question—"Do I know this Father?" or am I like some Anglo-Indian children brought up in England, who have never seen their father? They know a lot about him. No doubt ever crosses their mind that they are his children, and he their father (and in this they go beyond many Christians). They know all about his goodness and bravery in India. He sends them pocket-money, and they know his writing, and doubt not the letters come from him (and here again they surpass many critical Christians). But they do not know him personally,

though they have each a mental image of him, no two of which are alike; and all differ vastly from the original.

Faith, meditation and prayer

How can the human see the Divine? How can the finite apprehend anything of the Infinite? By faith and meditation and prayer it is possible, *because* the Spirit of His Son dwells in our hearts.

By *faith*—a firm, irrevocable, unquestioning grasp of the facts. He *is* our Father, He *is* love, He *is* light.

Eating the words. Assimilation.

But faith here means far more than mere assent. It really amounts to a mental eating of the ideas, an assimilating of the thought, so that it forms an actual part of the ego, a part of one's character. Indeed, when the facts are laid hold of, it becomes so absolutely a part of one's self that one could as soon doubt one's own existence as to doubt the Fatherhood, or the love, or the wisdom of God. It will be seen

that this statement goes a long way, but it must be remembered that God is so great, the Infinite so overpowering to the finite, the Eternal to us mortals, that the smallest faith that *really* brings us into personal touch with God takes us all the way, and God becomes henceforth the greatest fact and factor in our lives. Observe, it is quite possible to have a saving faith in the atonement and to have the new birth without ever possessing this knowledge at all.

Waiting on God.

By *meditation*, or in Biblical phrase, *waiting on God.* This waiting, so often spoken of in the Old Testament, is not, I am told, as would seem, a passive attitude, but an active reaching out of the spirit towards God. The meaning of the word was illustrated to me by the figure of a plant growing within a cave, stretching its stalk to an abnormal length to reach the light, but bearing

neither flowers nor fruit till it got there. This is *waiting on God.*

And then by *prayer*, which cannot be limited to asking for benefits, but must include all intercourse of the child with the Father; for one would not think much of a child who never spoke to his father except to ask him for something. It is true some Christians do this, as some schoolboys do, and especially those Anglo-Indian children of whom I spoke; but this only goes to prove the point that such children never knew their father.

Character of prayer changed.

The fact is that, the personal knowledge of God entirely changes the character of prayer as well as of all else. There are much fewer requests especially for one's self, and particularly for material blessings; and there is much more outpouring of the heart in love, adoration, and praise. What helps this prayer immensely is to remember that however imperfectly we may know and

apprehend God, He perfectly knows and comprehends us. *But now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God* (Gal. iv. 9, R.V.).

Let me repeat that in every passage in this chapter "to know" is γιγνωσκω, the personal or heart knowledge.

"Apprehend" and "comprehend."

I should like also to draw attention to the difference between "apprehend" and "comprehend." The latter word is never used in the New Testament. Καταλαμβανω is to apprehend or perceive, not fully to grasp. To apprehend is to lay hold of a part; to comprehend is to surround the whole. On earth, and now, the utmost we can do is to apprehend some small portion of the infinite glories of God, but God comprehends and knows us altogether.

The living God.

The second point to consider is that God is *the living God.* It is the *life* we want to grasp, for all our idols are dead;

and in much false religion the mind is resolutely fixed on a dead, impassive, Buddha-like conception of God and not on the living Father; on a dead Christ (as in a crucifix) and not on the living Lord.

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection (Phil. iii. 10), says the apostle; that is, the power of His life. It is a living Lord and God that Paul would know.

Personal knowledge implies life.

It is impossible to *know* (γινωσκω) what is not alive. It is quite possible to know it intellectually, but personal knowledge of the dead whom we never knew alive is a contradiction of terms.

All false religions have dead gods; it is the glory and distinction of Christianity to have a living God. This is frequently not known and realised—hence there is no personal knowledge, no real communion. It is a long step from a God who is a Force, who is unknowable and impersonal, to

a living Father—to *my* living Father; and the results in mind and heart and life are no less far reaching.

What love is.

Love, said a famous preacher at Westminster Abbey the other day, *is the effort to take another life into our own.*

So God in His infinite love takes our life into His; and that is a wondrous event in our history when through the personal link of love we take His life into ours. *Not living only, he infused new life*, says Bickersteth, speaking of the quickening power of Christ. And it is in the power of His resurrection that we learn this, for apart from this we are dead Godward; and we must have life to enjoy life.

The true God.

The third aspect in which we may know God is as *him that is true*, as set forth in 1 John v. 20: *That we may know him that is true.*

It is the revelation in the soul of the

truth, the justice, the light which God is, has, and shows forth.

Pause once again and ask yourself this question: "Do I know Him that is *true?* Is God's justice and truth a fact as simple and unquestioned as my own existence? Do I absolutely and without reserve of any sort believe it? Do I know it in my inmost being, in my heart; as well as clearly see by my reason that a God who is otherwise is a false God, a dead idol?" No God can be my God, no God can be the living Lord of heaven and earth, who is not light, justice, and truth.

True means real.

But it is more than this. Αληθης signifies true, but αληθινος, the word used here, has the special force of real —reality. We might well read this passage, *That we may personally know him that is reality.* Now, observe what a force we have here. *The* reality is God; all else are passing shows, or

God is the great reality.

figments created by our own minds, or fictitious projections of our own senses. *The* reality is God; all else, in a sense, is unreal. Just think over this. Let the force of it slowly burn in on the soul. Read again the text, *That we may know* (personally) *him that is real*, and let your mind slowly turn round from its former attitude of thinking that the things which are seen are real, and that God and the unseen are obscure and somewhat dubious objects of faith, until you see and believe that the centre of all reality is God, and that it is as things recede from Him and as they are materialised that they become unreal.[1]

It will be seen that in finally settling

[1] We are quite aware that here we touch somewhat closely on a truth contained in that American mysticism miscalled Christian Science; and surely it is the fact that it does contain certain truths that make it the more dangerous where not in line with Scripture. Half-truths, not whole falsehoods, are they which are most misleading.

this one point of view we alter the focus of a thousand other questions.

This standpoint once adopted, no further questionings can arise, no explanation or apologies are needed; nay, they become presumptious and unpardonable when God is thus known.

The man who does not know the king, says and thinks anything he likes. But once he enters the court circle, and enjoys the king's favour, his words are few, and nothing is questioned that the king as king says or does.

Our knowledge shown by our words.

One may thus judge somewhat by the conversation when in Christian company how much is known of God.

The God who is love.

The last aspect I would consider here in which God may be known to us is as love. *God is love*:—"*And we know . . . the love which God hath in us. God is love* (1 John iv. 16, R.V.).

It is obvious, if we believe in and know (γιγνωσκω) our living Father, who *is* true, and who *is* love, we have ALL; for what more is there? This is the central fact, the reality of life, once it is grasped; and nothing, nothing can compare with it in value. All else in life are incidents, circumstances, events, changing from day to day into rough and smooth, up and down, hard and easy, pleasant and disagreeable, pleasurable and painful; which, to the one who enjoys the knowledge of which we speak, are but as the sound of howling wind and lashing rain on the window-panes of a warm, well-built, well-lighted room in which he sits—at home.

Rest and peace.

Perhaps some weary soul and tempest-tossed spirit may sigh wistfully or despairingly over these words, but when these four points, and these alone, are fully known and realised, the result

follows as surely as the shadow follows the body which moves towards the light.

To recapitulate, the four points are: God is my *Father*; He is the *living* God; He is *truth*; and He is *love*.

Let us look for a moment more at this last point.

The love of God cannot be told.

How shall I speak of the love of God?

Could I with ink the ocean fill,
  Were the whole sky of parchment made,
Were every blade of grass a quill,
  And every man a scribe by trade—
To write the love of God to man
  Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
  Though stretched from earth to sky.

The language of experience.

Let me for a moment take the standpoint of one who with a personal knowledge of God and His love tries to put into language his experience concerning it; because experimental

language befits our theme far better than didactic or theoretic.

The delight of the home circle.

One looks out from the warm circle of God's love into a cold and distracted world pretty much as one may look out of the windows of a warmed, well-lighted express that is bearing one home, at a howling, angry storm raging without.

And then, as an upward stream of gratitude ascends, one recalls with wonder how it all came about. It seems to be in two stages.

The Agnostic period.

[1] There was the Agnostic period—the long life without knowledge of God at all, when the heavens were as brass and all the horizon bounded by the material. And then there was the night on which God spoke—spoke to the soul in words of life, when faith and hope were lighted

[1] This is *not* a record of personal experience, but a description in the first person of the steps that in some cases lead to God.

in the heart, and when God became known (οιδα) in Christ as the Saviour God, the new Father of a new-born child. The heavens were opened, and the invisible and eternal became realities to the soul. The Agnostic stage was passed, and God was made known (οιδα).

Intellectual knowledge of God.

And this knowledge deepened; more and more was found out about the Saviour, the Father, and the Home as one studied and put oneself in the way of such knowledge. But the rough and tumble of life pressed sore, and doubts arose. A sudden crash came: God was questioned and heaven was eclipsed; darkness came over the soul which, though it had believed in God, had never personally known Him. And then a Hand stretched forth and drew the battered, darkened soul into the light again, and into the warmth, and God's voice said—

Backsliding.

Personal acquaintance with God.

"Am I your Father? Well, sit [1] and look at Me."

"Am I all love? Well, sit and love Me."

"Am I all wise? Well, worship and adore Me."

And then thought followed thought, and as the eye of faith opened, God revealed Himself personally to the soul as never before; and the love *that passes knowledge* was at length known —a love that treats each one with a care and a tenderness that makes us realise our high position. Why, we cannot stir abroad without two guardian angels (like the faithful detectives who everywhere attend the king) shadowing us wherever we go. We do not often catch sight of them, but we know they are there, following us all the way; one is called *goodness*, and one is called *mercy*. For *goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life* (Psa. xxiii. 6).

The tenderness of God's love.

God's two detectives.

[1] *Seated . . . in the heavenly places* (Eph. ii. 6).

The Psalms speak to the heart.

It is to these Psalms the heart now turns. One does not go first to the New Testament for the expression of heart-thoughts, but to the Old, for though knowledge increases, the language of the heart remains the same in all ages; and we find in David's utterances the language of our own feelings, as all have found to whom God Himself is known. It is here indeed we find the Saviour's heart revealed, as in Psalms xvi. and xxii. In the Gospels we hear Him speak and see Him move, but it is in the Psalms that the mainspring is laid bare that moved that perfect life.

I have given an imaginary experience, but I will now give a real one from a letter recently received :—

Personal testimony.

I wonder if you remember telling me to read Romans v. 5. I almost realise that one could be able even down here to rejoice in suffering—of course, if we know God we rejoice in everything. It

is true, and I have found it. The last six months have, I think, been the very happiest of my life, though I think I have never suffered more, which sounds a very paradoxical thing to say—but you will understand. It is the half-knowledge that hinders one from learning.

I used at one time always to be wanting things for myself, not material things or necessarily in the least harmful things; but sympathy, appreciation, culture of talents, etc. Now I feel as if I wanted absolutely nothing, and suddenly I find myself rich in all that is worth having; and able to GIVE, *and* GIVE, *and* GIVE *to all I meet who are in any need.*

How can I illustrate this? I have a pipe that brings water down from a small cistern that holds a gallon. Such a cistern is soon emptied. But if it be connected with a lake miles long, I find to my surprise that the cistern,

though it still only holds a gallon, has suddenly become inexhaustible. My heart is the gallon cistern, and soon runs dry; but once connected with God it never can, and I am able *to give, and give, and give* to all.

The letter continues: *I do not know that I can explain very clearly; it is simply like living in a new world. I do not fret any more over sleepless nights, and so they do not seem to harm me as they did. The power of Christ within can overcome even this engrained enemy of heredity, and I hardly now ever feel irritable, and never show it as I used to.*

Such a letter speaks for itself, and needs no explanation from me.

The deepest knowledge of all.

Let us now pass on to consider a fuller knowledge still, for which a special Greek word is reserved. Ἐπιγινώσκω (epiginosko), the verb, occurs

in connection with the knowledge of God four times in the New Testament, and ἐπίγνωσις (epignosis), the noun, occurs seven times. One of them is in connection with the judgment of God (Rom. i. 32); the other ten we will examine in the order in which they occur.

Christ's knowledge of God.

In Matt. xi. 27 we read, *No one knoweth* (ἐπιγινωσκω) *the Son, save the Father, neither doth any know the Father, save the Son*—a passage which shows to what a height this fuller knowledge may extend, referring as it does here to that absolute knowledge that springs from unity, a knowledge inconceivable to us. It is, of course, no wonder that such a special word should be used, for it is evident human language is here strained to the utmost. But we are filled with wonder as we mark the conclusion of the verse, *and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him;* for we see this deep, this

perfect knowledge is said to belong to those to whom the Son reveals the Father. If we are to press the full meaning of the word here, we must consider this special knowledge is the portion of few, and refers to those saintly souls whose consecrated lives proclaim their nearness to the Divine.

Few possess this deepest knowledge.

In all our inquiries and all our studies on this subject we can only judge of the measure of the acquaintance of others with God by certain well-marked results in life and conduct.

It seems to me that the moment the dark days of Agnosticism end and acquaintance with God commences a distinct change of character is seen: the Bible is studied; the language and life have constant reference to the Divine; a new peace and joy is seen and felt. But if the knowledge extends not beyond the *οιδα*, there may also be language and thoughts concern-

God changes the character.

ing God deeply dishonouring to Him, as well as much complaint and misery.

Let the knowledge progress a second stage, and become γιγνωσκω (personal), and the character undergoes a further change, just as clear and well marked as after the soul first passed from death to life: of course it may be simultaneous with this. Humility and reverence are now ever marked in connection with God. He is never named or thought of without love and adoration; and all unsuitable thoughts, murmurings, and questionings become not only suppressed but impossible. The spirit, too, is calm, and steady, and earnest.

The language changes.

If to this we add the yet deeper development described by επιγνωσις, we reach the greatest nearness to God attainable on earth; we find impressed on the finite the closest likeness to the Infinite; the life and

thought are wholly consecrated, and all now belongs to the Father Infinite, who is now ALL and in all.

We shall fully know God.

The other passage we note where the verb describing this fullest knowledge occurs twice is in 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and refers to the full blaze of knowledge in heaven, *Then shall I* (fully) *know even as also I am* (fully) *known.*

The noun επιγνωσις first occurs in Eph. i. 17 : *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the* (full) *knowledge of him.* Here we see that this deep knowledge of God is the result of the gift of a spirit of special wisdom and knowledge from God. Ephes. iv. 13 (R.V.), *Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the* (full) *knowledge of the Son of God,* refers also to final perfection in knowledge; but Col. i. 9, 10 (R.V.) speaks of the present,

The most wonderful prayer of St. Paul.

and is the most amazing passage we have yet reached. The apostle prayed that the Colossians *may be filled with the* (full) *knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the* (full) *knowledge of God.*

Consider what, in the first place, a full knowledge of the will of God must mean, involving, as the apostle here says, *all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*

To know God is heaven begun.

And again, *increasing in the* (full) *knowledge of God.* If heaven consists in the knowledge of and enjoyment of God, it was surely begun with any of these Colossians for whom the apostle's prayers were answered. And we believe it was not confined to them, but that such a knowledge has been enjoyed all through the ages by men of God whose lives have borne wit-

ness to the closeness of their walk with Him.

Strong language of St. Peter.

The remaining four instances are in 2 Peter, and I think are characteristic of his writing (as he only uses the simpler word "γνωσις" once in relation to God), and correspond in their intensity with his use of *multiply* (2 Pet. i. 2) instead of the *add* of St. Paul.

The fullest knowledge of God *may be* enjoyed now.

Our consideration, therefore, of this fuller word opens up these three thoughts: that this is the knowledge that Christ Himself possesses, and that we shall certainly enjoy in heaven: that even now, apparently, in answer to earnest and special prayer, it is vouchsafed to those who are near enough to God to receive it: and that those who have this deeper personal revelation show its effects indelibly impressed upon their life and character.

Personal knowledge leads to greater intelligence.

Finally, returning to γιγνωσκω, there is no doubt that as this personal knowledge is enjoyed it leads to a further and fuller understanding of the οιδα or intelligence in the Divine revelation; which intelligence alone, however diligently pursued, is barren and unfruitful apart from the real knowledge of God.

More near than I unto myself can be
Art Thou to me;
So have I lost myself in finding Thee,
Have lost myself for ever, O my Sun!
The boundless Heaven of Thine eternal love
Around me, and beneath me, and above;
In glory of that golden day
The former things have passed away,
I, past and gone.

GERHARDT TER STEEGEN.

THE LIFE OF GOD'S CHILD

Only to sit and think of God,
  Oh! what a joy it is!
To think the thought, to breathe the name,
  Earth has no higher bliss.

There's not a craving in the mind
  Thou dost not meet and still;
There's not a wish the heart can have
  Which Thou dost not fulfil.

O little heart of mine! shall pain
  Or sorrow make thee moan,
When all this God is all for thee,
  A Father all thine own?

Father! what hast Thou grown to now?
  A joy all joys above,
Something more sacred than a fear,
  More tender than a love!

With gentle swiftness lead me on,
  Dear God! to see Thy face;
And meanwhile in my narrow heart
  Oh! make Thyself more space.

F. W. FABER.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE OF GOD'S CHILD

I PROPOSE in this chapter to consider some special features in the life of a Christian who possesses this personal knowledge of God of which I speak. Perhaps a glance at a Bible-picture from the Old Testament may help us a little in the outset.

Three powers of evil—the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We all know that as the Divinity is known to us in three persons, so there are arrayed against the soul three powers of evil—the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In the story of the children of

Israel we see the picture of the Christian's life. They were slaves in Egypt until they were redeemed from this bondage by the death of the lamb and the sprinkling of its blood, of which the Passover was the commemoration. They then passed through the Red Sea and left Pharaoh and his host at the bottom of it; being thus delivered from Egypt and its prince by water, as the Christian is delivered from the power of the world and of the devil by the death of Christ.

The story of Israel.

The flesh, *i.e.*, themselves continued with them, and gave them great trouble for forty years, until they too were left at the bottom of another water (the Jordan) by placing twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes, there, before entering Canaan. Thus all three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, were left behind before they reached the promised land. That

Canaan is not heaven.

Canaan was no picture of heaven is clear, seeing that so much fighting went on there; but it is equally clear that it is a type or picture of the *heavenly places* spoken of in Eph. vi. 12, as this is the very spot where all the hardest fighting goes on. And yet, in spite of the battles, Canaan had its own delights unknown to the desert. The barren sands were replaced by the rich soil of valley and mountain-side clothed with the vine and fig-tree, the manna by *the old corn of the land* (Josh. v. 11), the pathless track by the walled cities, and the arid desert by the luxuriant pastures and plains well watered by lakes and rivers. (*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*—1 Cor. x. 11).

The wilderness and Canaan

If now, turning from this picture to the reality, the type to the antitype,

you compare Heb. iv. 11 with Eph. ii. 6, you will at once see the difference between the wilderness and Canaan, and at the same time perceive that the Christian is said even now to be in both these different places —in the wilderness as to his body and outward life, in Canaan as to his spirit and inner life. I wonder if I can explain how a man can be tramping through life, *labouring to enter into that rest*, and yet at the same time be *seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;* or, in other words, how Israelites might be walking across the desert and yet be living at home in Canaan?

Well, though it may be logically impossible for a man to be in two places at once, it is possible in a spiritual sense.

The tired pilgrim.

Just look at the two pictures for a moment. There is the footsore, weary pilgrim faithfully pressing on, yet very

tired and often very cross, hardly, perhaps, a pleasant companion, for there is so much against him along the rough road that he has all he can do to keep his footing. But the pilgrim is worse than this; for the man who has not crossed the Jordan often grumbles and complains against and often doubts the living God, often turns back again in heart to Egypt (see Num. xiv.).

The child at home.

Now look at the other picture. You see a man at rest in Canaan, sitting in happy company at home. The two are complete contrasts. To *sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* What does this mean? Observe the words. First, *in heavenly places.* Do you know what it is to be *in* anything? What a difference it makes. The other day I was near York, and the rain was lashing and the wind howling, and it was fearfully wet and cold and miserable. But I was dry and warm and happy, being *in*

In Christ Jesus.

a dining saloon of a Great Northern express. Some years ago I was at the top of Snowdon, and a dreadful thunder-storm was raging; the rain came down in torrents. I was safe and dry, being *in* the little hut at the top. Last year I was off Jaffa, and the sea was tossing; the boats rose and fell some twenty feet, and the sailors staggered about in them, often well-nigh overboard; but I never moved as I stood looking on at the tumult below, for I was on the deck of a huge Hamburg-American liner. So also, in the storms of life what you are "*in*" makes all the difference, and *in* this ship there was no motion to be felt.

Seated in heavenly places.

I cannot, of course, say what idea being *in heavenly places* conveys to my readers. To me it seems the acme of safety and comfort,[1] in complete con-

[1] It has, of course, another side, as we have shown, where we stand and fight; but here it is no question of this.

trast to the toilsome scenes of earth's pilgrimage.

Seated together is the next phrase to consider. This appears to be in direct antithesis to the perpetual *walking* of the pilgrim, and also to the firm *standing* of the warrior (chap. vi.), so often solitary. It does not imply physical progress, at any rate. It suggests the ideas of rest, comfort, companionship, peace and quiet; it speaks of the inner life of the Christian who knows his God —it revives and strengthens him for the fierce and undying conflict with all the powers of evil that rage around him, as described in chap. vi.[1]

Rest, safety, and enjoyment.

And, lastly, consider the phrase, *in Christ Jesus*. Here, indeed, language fails, and the mind falters in trying to realise the meaning of such words.

[1] Compare here 1 Kings x. 5: *the* SITTING *of his* (*Solomon's*) *servants.*

To be saved by Christ Jesus, to believe in Christ Jesus, is much; but to be *in Christ Jesus*—what can it mean? Surely it is the expression of the greatest nearness to God of which language is capable! The whole sentence, perhaps, may be paraphrased: *Placed in a condition of perfect rest, safety, and enjoyment, so near God as to know Him, not as His far-off subjects may, but as the sons of His house, the members of His family.*

A pleasant Christian.

The man who is in this position and knows it, is a delightful person to meet; he is pleasant in manner, he is not tired or hurried or depressed or murmuring. He is seated at home in his own sphere and enjoying it. Hence, with every want supplied, in touch with all-love and all-wisdom, he is naturally utterly unselfish (no praise to him), and is full of strength and courage to fight the good fight, to finish his course, and to

keep the faith [the warfare, the walk, the witness of the Christian man (2 Tim. iv. 7)]. But the secret of it all, the source of his strength and untiring zeal, is found in his being *seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. No murmur is ever heard here, no doubts are possible here—no discords of earth's purblind reasonings. The eye is opened, and the ears ; and, the tongue has learned to speak the language of Heaven, so that it calls bitter, sweet ; and pain, joy ; and all ill, good,—so it be His sweet will.

No murmurs in heavenly places.

Such, then, is the twofold life of God's child, at home *now* with God in Christ in Heavenly Places, in perfect happiness while fighting the battles of the Lord, or standing at His door and waiting, or treading a lonely path across a wilderness just as it pleases Him.

The twofold life of God's child.

So far we have considered the Chris-

tian as seated far away in spirit from the busy scenes of life—in Christ Jesus. Consider now a little the ordinary outer life of God's child from day to day. What is it like? What marks does it bear which show that the Father is personally known?

I think we may enumerate a few. We have a defence; we grow; we live in harmony; we are at liberty; we keep time; our character is changed in many ways. Let us consider now a little some of these marks of a personal knowledge of God.

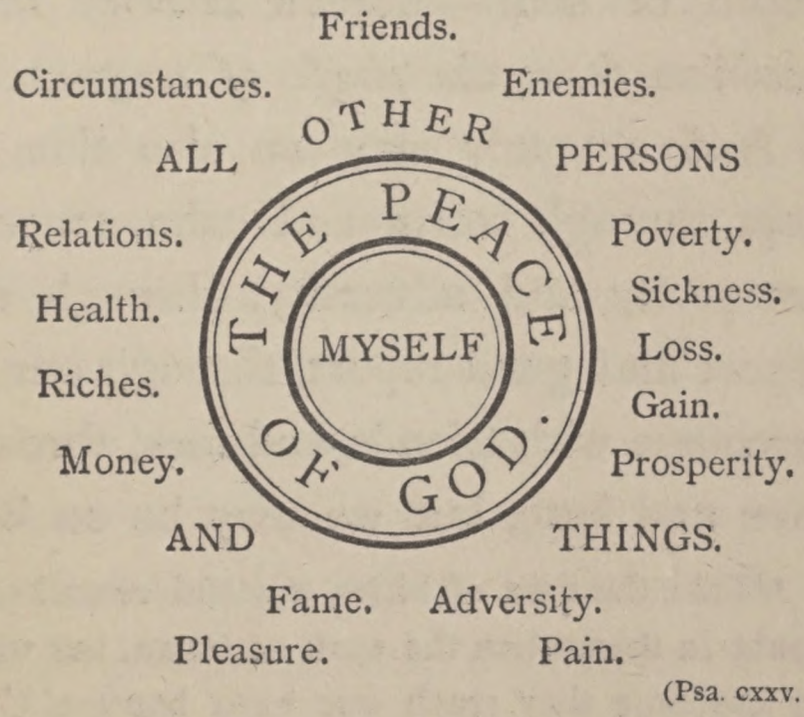
We have absolute defence against evil.

In the first place it is an absolute *defence* against all evil, as described in those wonderful words in Phil. iv. 7: *And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts.* *Keep* is literally *to garrison*, and is a military term: it is so used in 2 Cor. xi. 32: KEPT *the city of the Damascenes* WITH A GARRISON. In Psa. xxxi. 20 we

read, *Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.* Of course if God is round about one, He is not only nearer than aught else, but nothing can reach one except through Him: and it is thus, and thus alone, the soul can be kept in perfect peace while storms rage without.

Surrounded by the peace of God.

It is possible that a very simple diagram may help here better than explanatory words.



(Psa. cxxv. 2.)

This shows clearly that nothing can

reach one so kept except through God.[1]

Christ was misunderstood.

Our Lord Himself experienced this all through His life on earth. He experienced it in the unbelief of His brethren; He experienced it in the misunderstandings and desertions of His own disciples; in the cruel calumnies and coldness of His own cities. He passed through all this with a deep and perfect calm of spirit, an unruffled depth of soul — hidden *secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

Peace depends on position.

And not only may we also thus be kept through storm and calm, through prosperity and adversity, through evil report and good report, through our intercourse with friends and foes, through love and hate, but we may be so kept

[1] Take the case of bitter, spiteful remarks, no doubt in themselves the work of Satan, but which by the time they reach one have become God's will for one. Things wrong in themselves, passing through the peace of God, become blessings.

without effort; it is a question of fact, dependent on position. The things really do *not* and cannot touch us in the same way at all if they have to pass through the peace of God first. *Nothing can hurt us*, says Maeterlinck, *save through the medium of our own minds*, and if this mind is garrisoned by God we cannot really be hurt. (See also Luke x. 19: *Nothing shall by any means hurt you.*)

Shirt of chain-mail.

This protection is something like a defence still used though little known. I allude to a shirt of the finest chain-mail worn under the ordinary dress. The man wearing this appears to be as much exposed to injury as his neighbour, but there is all the difference. Neither bullet nor dagger can reach him; he walks about impregnable, not even pin-pricks can hurt him.

So the Christian moves invulnerable, whose heart is kept in the peace of

God, born of personal knowledge of Him. He looks like other men, but he has an unseen defence keeping him safe in every danger.

Observe, this never can make him callous or indifferent. No one sympathised like Christ. Was He callous or indifferent in Matt. xi., when, under the influence of the grossest calumnies (for which He could praise God), He extended His arms to a perishing world in the touching appeal of its closing verses?

Growth from knowledge of God.

A second effect (for I must be brief) of nearness to God is *growth*—beautiful, natural, harmonious growth, the simple result of being so near the light; differing wholly from the frail, artificial products of doctrinal schools and spiritual hot-beds.

These lines somewhat express the thought:—

My inmost soul, O Lord, to Thee
Leans like a growing flower
Unto the light; I do not know
The day nor blessed hour
When that deep-rooted daring growth
We call the heart's desire
Shall burst and blossom to a prayer.

. . . . .

And yet my heart will sing
Because thou seem'st sometimes so near,
Close-present God, to me;
It seems I could not have a wish
That was not shared by Thee.

ANON.[1]

Change of character.

The character changes insensibly because the graces acquired are unconscious; and not only so, but a new language altogether, the language of heaven, is slowly learned and begins to be heard from our lips. It is not that we use religious phrases, or put on what are believed to be Christian graces, but that an inward growth of

Change of language.

[1] From "Let us Pray," a pamphlet by Rev. W. H. Griffith Thomas (Partridge).

spirit in nearness and likeness to God produces of itself changes which are not adopted by us consciously but are produced unconsciously. Things look different to us, and we find ourselves, as I have said, calling loss—gain, and pain—pleasure. Our standpoint with God has the effect of turning many things upside down and reversing the current standards of blessings and trials. The change, I repeat, is not outward, as in a volunteer who puts on a uniform but is a civilian at heart; but inward, as of a regular soldier who in or out of uniform has a military spirit.

Harmony in all the being.

Another result of living with God, or, as it has been beautifully expressed, living *in Tune with the Infinite*, is *harmony*:—all discord ceases. Now, as Professor James has pointed out in his Giffard Lectures, this harmony is the very health of the man. As long as

there is discord between any of the relations of any part of the man—body, soul, or spirit—or between the finite and Infinite, there is a depressing and unhealthy element. There can be no doubt that the peace and joy that fill the heart when God is known are partly due to the complete harmony of the whole being.

Effect on physical health.

This harmony produces a solidity, a steadiness in the whole life and conduct, and is, as I have said, a real source, not only of spiritual but absolutely of physical health.

Liberty results from the knowledge of God.

Another result is *liberty*. It is no longer an outward fence that keeps us from straying, which means bondage, but an inward attachment: where our treasure is there our heart is also; and this is liberty.

The question is no longer "what," but "why." "What I do" and "what

I say" refer to externals and outward appearance; "why" refers to the spring, the life, the motive, the character. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* But that is just what many Christians do not like and do not understand. They much prefer law to grace. They like being given a list of things forbidden and a list of those permitted, and they run to one another for fresh laws and fresh prohibitions where the Word of God is silent. It is hard to say which gives them the greater pleasure, to lay down laws for other people or to have laws laid down by others for them.

Amateur law-makers.

It is needless to say neither of these has anything to do with the liberty of the Spirit or with the life of freedom, guided and governed by the love of God.

A fence and a bridle for horses and mules.

You see, it requires no spirituality or knowledge of God to keep within a fence beyond which one must not pass.

That is being *held in with bit and bridle.* But to be absolutely free, *guided with the eye,* and only to do God's will, to live in the power of a new life and nature, does indeed require the personal knowledge of God; so that we may say, liberty and love characterise this personal knowledge of which we speak, and law and bondage its absence.

Christians who keep time.

Again, this knowledge of God enables us to *keep time.* What I mean by this can be understood by reference to a watch. Take out yours and look at it. What does 10.15 mean? Why does the watch say it is 10.15, and why is that the *right* time and what is the *right* time? The right time is God's time, and it takes the whole orderly movement of the mighty solar system to make it 10.15; and your watch—being a good one—has so learned to move in harmony with God's world that the two hands are

always found pointing out God's time—the right time—at any and every moment day and night. Always in the right place at the right time, that is what God's child who knows his Father learns to be. He keeps time—God's time. He does not run before he is sent; or stay when he should be gone. He is not like a cheap watch, ever too fast or too slow—he is a chronometer, one that you can take time from. Of course this is only in part. The only one who ever kept God's time fully on earth was the Son of God.

What is the right time?

Some Christians are like an American watch called "Waterbury," that requires a fearful amount of winding up. These people stop altogether, and keep no time at all unless they are for ever being wound up by meetings and services, and missions, and conventions.

Christians and Waterbury watches.

But I saw this year a clever invention

—a self-winding watch, one that you may wear for twenty years, and it can't run down, but is always wound up—it is self-winding; and the power that winds it is just the daily work and movement of the wearer. This causes a lever inside the case to swing backwards and forwards, and so wind it up. In like manner the child who knows and loves his Heavenly Father needs no winding up. He is self-winding, and the power is the joy and love that flow into his heart from God. It is no question of effort; it is spontaneous.

Self-winding watch.

Dealing as I do here with the Christian's spiritual life at home with God, I touch on thoughts and feelings that are seldom spoken of, though often experienced.

The Christian's home-life.

If a Christian, however, has not learned to occupy the double position of which I recently have spoken

—that of being seated in Christ, at home with God, as well as that of living down here, he has none of these experiences, but has, as it were, to live "in lodgings," and always bears the stamp of his uncomfortable surroundings. He looks spiritually unkempt and uncared for, and shows the effects of bad food and poor quarters in many ways.

Living in lodgings and at home.

On the other hand, the Christian who is privileged to know (γιγνωσκω) God, and is thus at home with Him, soon shows it in his appearance.

This has been beautifully described as follows in words which, as we read them, make us long that they were true in our own experience.

Pictureof man who lives with God.

When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn. He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with

a Divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his life, and be content with all places and any service he can reach. He will calmly front the morrow in the negligency of that trust which carries God with it, and so has the whole future in the bottom of his heart.

Such is the language of a modern observer. But a more wonderful account of the change that the knowledge of God makes comes from one of the greatest of these early feelers after God, who sought after Him (though unknown) that He might find Him, and who, I am persuaded, did in some way reach Him and touch Him.

Socrates in the "Phædrus of Plato.

In the "Phædrus" of Plato[1] Socrates, sitting under a palm-tree on the banks of the Ilyssus just outside Athens, thus

[1] "Plato: Works of." Tr. Henry Carey, 1848; text, Stallbaum. Vol. i. "Phædrus," sec. 63, pp. 326, 329.

speaks of God to his young friend Phædrus :—

They endeavour to discern of themselves the nature of God, and when they grasp Him with their memory—being inspired by Him—they receive from Him their MANNERS *and* PURSUITS, *as far as it is possible for man to participate of God.*

Thoughts on God.

Just consider this marvellous sentence, written over two thousand years ago. Contact with God so alters us, says Socrates, that we receive from Him our *manners* and *pursuits.*

"Our manners"—are they in very deed received from God, and are all our pursuits ordered by Him?

Socrates looks at the soul as having lived in the presence of God before entering the body, and goes on to say :

The soul and its wings.

Any one who is reminded of the True, begins to recover his wings, and having recovered them, longs to soar aloft; but

being unable to do so, LOOKS UPWARD LIKE A BIRD (we all understand this exquisite simile, so true to nature), *and despising things below, is deemed affected with madness* (as indeed Socrates was himself).

When they see any resemblance of things there (in heaven) *they are amazed, and no longer masters of themselves* (remembering) *when they beheld in the pure light—perfect, simple, calm, and blessed visions, unmasked* (unhampered) *with this which we now carry about with us and call the body, tethered to it like an oyster to its shell.*

The oyster and its shell.

I wonder what my readers think of the depth of understanding displayed by these old philosophers—to whom was vouchsafed no light of revelation—as they speak of the effects of the knowledge of God in the human soul, in language that is almost that of an eye-witness. To me it is mar-

vellous; and one is ashamed to think how little of this sort of knowledge is ours, with all our Christian training and spiritual light.

Earlier still, Sophocles pointed out that the power of a God is shown by producing *content* in the heart, which at the same time He *conquers*.[1]

And lastly, we may add that the very *thoughts* are changed by contact with God, and words are used in a new and strange sense.

Character changed in seven ways.

So we may say that the knowledge of God changes the character, the personality, in at least *seven* ways.

The *mind*, as Socrates shows, is changed; the *desires* are changed so that by some he "is accounted mad." The *manners* and *pursuits*, too, are changed by nearness to God, according to this same wise philosopher. One becomes "*content*," moreover, as

[1] See chap. iii. p. 55.

Sophocles points out, and the heart and will are *conquered.* Furthermore our *thoughts* are changed, and we attach a new meaning to our words.

Let us take these seven points briefly in order.

1. The mind is changed.

The *mind* is changed. Consider one point with regard to this in the light of psychology, wireless telegraphy, and modern experiments in telepathy or thought-transference, which is the power, the unconscious power, of one mind over another.

The mind casts a shadow.

Some years ago, in the course of a sermon, I heard one sentence that I shall never forget. It is this: *The mind casts a shadow just like the body.*

This is absolutely true, as we all know. As we pass through this world our mind, our personality, unknown to ourselves, and without an effort or desire, is ever casting shadows for good or evil on all whom we meet. Some

move through the world as life-giving ozone; diffusing light, and good, and health wherever they go. Others are as an infectious miasma, and spread darkness, sin, and sickness around them.

Our minds are like ferments.

Our minds are like ferments. A ferment is a body which, without undergoing any change itself, is able, even in minute quantities, to effect a radical and permanent change in other bodies with which it is brought in contact; as, for instance, the ferment in the saliva changes starch into sugar.

Starch changed into sugar.

You will find persons with this power. A room may be full of starchy, stiff people, and the presence of one warm and loving nature may have power to change the whole atmosphere, and the starch will dissolve before it into sugar.

In view of this unconscious power of one mind over another, let us now consider what it means for one who is in

contact with God to touch others; thus forming instantaneously a line of communication with the Divine.

To know God is to be a blessing.

Such an one necessarily becomes, though it may be in very small measure, the unconscious channel through which God passes into the hearts of those around him. No one can possibly come in contact with one who knows (γιγνωσκω) God without being the better for it.

We therefore reach this glorious, this delightful truth: that you cannot be blessed yourself without becoming a blessing to others.

You cannot live with the peace of a heavenly home in your heart of hearts, *in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, without radiating the glories of that home, like rays of light and heat—without effort and often without consciousness on your part. Virtue goes out of you, though you may not know it. No work, therefore, that a Christian may

Virtue goes out unconsciously.

carry on can be compared in power and in value to others with a life in personal touch with God.

2. The desires are changed.

The *desires* are changed. This is one of the most remarkable results of the knowledge of God. Without effort, imperceptibly and unconsciously, the desires, the likes and dislikes, are changed; and of course the habits and pursuits of life are altered in consequence.

Now this is the right, the Christian order; all else is artificial and human. Once again it is a question not of *what*, but *why*.

Not "what," but "why."

To alter habits and pursuits as long as desires are unchanged does positive harm, in my opinion: no progress is made by it, no results gained.

"Giving up" is no use

One hears perpetually on every side such questions as—"Is this or that right or wrong?" "Should I 'give up' dancing, plays, cards, and what

not?" Now all this is a mistake, all unspiritual. What use is it to "give up" with unaltered desires, and play the hypocrite?

No, the true way, the way of Rom. xii. 2, is to effect the change by the transformation of the spirit; and this involves no "giving up."[1] The very expression condemns the act. Draw near to God, learn to know (γιγνωσκω) Him, and the result is the *desires* are changed, and in consequence the pursuits alter; but there is no giving up—no loss—only gain. Oh! to learn this more excellent way!

3. The manners are changed.

The next result, according to Socrates, is, the *manners* are changed. What knowledge this remark reveals of the power of God! One would

[1] *I had come in contact with the Great Healer; I had got a view of One on Whom it is impossible to look without experiencing transformation of soul.* (JOSEPH BARKER, late Infidel Lecturer.)

think it must be the language of an eye-witness rather than that of intuition.

The manners of a friend of God.

The manners are changed! I wonder what sort of "manners" Enoch's became. Perhaps we can picture in some measure what the manners of a man who walked with God for three hundred years would be like, if we closely analyse the ways of the Son of God on earth. The combination of absolute transparent simplicity with unassumed and therefore natural dignity; the sweetness of the reflection of perfect love, with the truth and sincerity of perfect wisdom; the outward grace and courtesy, the inward peace and calm (*ohne hast, ohne rast*), the sweet reasonableness of the true Christian character, would all be seen in these God-given manners. To learn one's manners in court circles is much; but to bear unconsciously in one's words and ways something, however little,

Sweet reasonableness.

of the stamp of the Divine is most wonderful.

4. The pursuits are changed.

The *pursuits* are changed. This rightly follows, as we have seen, the change of desire. If it precedes it, it is useless, it is artificial, it is a denial of the method of Christianity, which ever works from within, outwards. But the pursuits *are* changed, and changed by the knowledge of God. One is just as keen, but keen after different objects. Man and God have changed places. Before—man loomed large in the foreground, and God was small and dim in the far perspective. Now—He fills the vision, and man shrinks to his right proportions. Hence, with the new standpoint, the necessary change of pursuits.

5. The heart is content.

The heart is *content*. This is what "all the world's a seeking," and can never find. Observe this ineffable peace

and calm steals in upon the soul *the moment my eyes rested on Him.*

The sight of God changes all.

Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job xlii. 6). Abhorrence of self and deep repentance may be the first immediate effect of the sight of God; but the abiding and positive result in the soul to which the other is the negative is best expressed by the word "content." Content is harmony, is health, is holiness, is wholeness.

6. The man is conquered.

The next result closely follows—one is *conquered*, as Sophocles shows, by the mere realized presence of God. There is no battle, no strife. There is much, very much, conflict, doubtless, in the Christian's experience, as the seventh of Romans so graphically depicts: there is war in my members; *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh* (Gal. v. 17). But this con-

quering of which we speak is emphatically not the result of successful battle, but rather of the sudden presence of such overwhelming forces in the soul, that no battle is ever possible. The word, or even the presence alone, was sufficient for Iole before Hercules: how much more for the soul of man before the living God!

No battle is possible.

The reason our evil natures and fleshly desires make such a strong fight within is simply because God is not thus known (γιγνωσκω). Hence I strive in this book with much insistence and no little reiteration to describe and illustrate the power and value of this knowledge.

No fight where God is known.

When our eyes behold God, truly it is love that conquers (*Amor*, not *labor*, *omnia vincit*). Love not constrained nor forced; but love spontaneous. Love that leaps forth like the steel to the magnet, the moment the overwhelming power of God is felt and known,

7. The thoughts are changed.

Lastly, the *thoughts* are changed. We spoke of the change of language, the outcome of this changed thought, in the last chapter. Here we touch the spring. It is absolutely no longer possible to think of God in the inmost soul save with deepest reverence and love. Never more would it occur to one to be daring enough to explain or defend, still less to question, one of His actions.

God the new centre of thought.

To me at least, if I thus know Him, He is all-wise; to me at least He is all love. And beyond this He is my Father, and I am His child; and this affects every thought I think as well as every word I utter; for it is emphatically the central truth of my life—the pivot round which my existence revolves.

Much, much more might be said on the life of God's child, of which we have merely here just taken up one or two salient features.

THE WALK OF GOD'S CHILD

God's glory is a wondrous thing,
  Most strange in all its ways;
And, of all things on earth, least like
  What men agree to praise.

As He can endless glory weave
  From what men reckon shame,
In His own world He is content
  To play a losing game.

God's justice is a bed, where we
  Our anxious hearts may lay,
And, weary with ourselves, may sleep
  Our discontent away.

For right is right, since God is God;
  And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty;
  To falter would be sin.

F. W. FABER.

CHAPTER V

THE WALK OF GOD'S CHILD

I GAVE in the last chapter what I judge to be the effect on a human soul of the known presence of God *now;* but the mind still turns back with wonder and with awe to that dim dawn of the world when, with hardly a ray of the knowledge we possess and use, a man *walked with God* for three hundred years. We long to know more about his *walk*; to understand his thoughts and feelings.

The dim light of Enoch's world.

The thoughts of Enoch.

It may be that a study of the life of Enoch—the man who walked with God

The man who walked with God.

—will help us here. The notices about Enoch are not many, but they are significant.

History of Enoch.

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years.[1] *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him* (Gen. v. 21–24).

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Heb. xi. 5).

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints (Jude 14).

[1] Methuselah is said to mean *when he is dead it shall be sent*, and the flood came the day he died. It is possible that it was some intimation of the flood at Methuselah's birth that changed Enoch's character and made him *walk with God.*

This is all—but it is more than has ever been said of any man since, and Enoch was only the seventh from Adam.

Enoch pleased God

For three hundred years Enoch walked with God day by day, and *before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God, i.e.*, at the close of his life; which was, I judge, essentially a private one, and not a public one like Noah's.

We find this idea of pleasing God in the New Testament, at the baptism of our Lord, where on coming out of the water He heard these words from His Father, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Testimony to Christ.

The occasion when this testimony was given is remarkable. Jesus had as yet done no mighty works, spoken no gracious words as far as we know. His life for man had hardly begun; He stood on the threshold of His public life, and He had just concluded thirty

years of humble, private, industrious life at Nazareth. This life is not recorded for us by the evangelists, though we have no reason to suppose that, seeing Mark wrote about forty years after Christ's death, there would be any real difficulty in obtaining particulars about it. But the Holy Spirit has dropped a veil over it which we cannot now penetrate, for this life was wholly for God.

Private life at Nazareth.

When the Father, therefore, at the junction of Christ's private and public life opened the heavens to express His approval of His Son, may not the reason be other than is generally supposed? The popular explanation is that it was the expression of the Father's approval in His Son on His taking the lowly place of identification with a faithful remnant of the nation in baptism. But surely there was more than this.

Why God spoke at Christ's baptism.

I venture, therefore, to suggest that

this *well pleased* referred to the part of the life of Christ already completed —that is, to the private life that had been lived for so long at home, and not to that public life which was still to come. This is the only passage which shows us what those thirty years were to God. And the same God takes care still that the private lives of His children shall not want His public approval. The honours and rewards with which God will distinguish private lives utterly unknown on earth will, I think, be one of the surprises of heaven. We know nothing of Enoch's three hundred years of private life except this —that he had *this testimony, that he pleased*[1] *God:* but it is enough.

Public and private life.

[1] The discrimination of the approval is foreshadowed in Rom. xvi., where we find such shades of difference in a Christian's life noted as *bestowed much labour, of note, helper, approved labour, labour much, chosen.* Respecting Phœbe, notice she is described as sister, servant, saint, and succourer.

What was possible for him is an object of earnest ambition to us.

Tablet at Victoria University.

On the wall of the great staircase in the Victoria University at Manchester is a solitary marble tablet to the memory of one, who died as a pioneer in the mission-field, and at the base of it are these words in Greek: *Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of* (lit., *well-pleasing*[1] *to*) *him* (2 Cor. v. 9). The same word that is used for Enoch is the ambition of St. Paul and of all who have since followed in his steps.

Christians can please God.

The Father, then, not only finds delight in His only begotten Son, but in the many sons who have walked with

[1] These two words, well pleasing, are εναρεστος, a private expression of great pleasure; that used at Christ's baptism is ενδοκεω, a word of more public character, in keeping with the occasion, and meaning approbation.

Him before and since. How, then, was this testimony made known to Enoch? I think that an inward consciousness of God's favour was given to him.

Inward consciousness of God's favour.

Do we not all remember when we were children at home, the vivid sense we had and the joy it gave us, when we felt, without any words being spoken on either side, that our parents were well pleased with us? How the knowledge sent us skipping and singing, light-footed and light-hearted about the house?

So it is in the heavenly family. There is a consciousness of being *well-pleasing* to God that gives no occasion for pride, but that affords perhaps the purest delight the human soul can know.

Conditions of Enoch's life.

In what, then, did this walk with God of Enoch's consist?

Not, certainly, in head-knowledge, for he had none. There was no Bible, no

Christianity, no revealed Father, and yet, and yet—what a life! It consisted in the personal knowledge of God as his Friend, and his nearest and best-known Friend too, with whom he was always to be found wherever one came across him during three hundred years.

What walking with God means.

This is the real inner meaning of a walk with God: God nearer and dearer than anything or any one else in heaven or on earth, and as near in the market-place and counting-house as in the study or in church. Let us grasp well this idea, and consider quietly what it means, and then we can glance at its effects on life and conduct.

It is easy for us to walk with God.

How easy it is now for us to walk with a God fully revealed to us in His love in the gift of His Son, in His wisdom, in the knowledge we now have of His glorious creation: all of which was hidden from Enoch! The more we ponder over this the more are we

amazed at two wonders—that Enoch should live so near, and we so far from God.

What would we not give to have known Enoch and learned what walking with God really meant to him? What that constant intercourse was; how it affected him; and how it was maintained?

Wonderful to say, although we can never hope to learn this on earth, we have had handed down to us by a Cardinal Beaufort in France the real thoughts and experiences of one who for sixty years *walked with God.* He was a poor peasant in Lorraine in France, and his name was Nicholas Herman. He was a footman, and at eighteen years of age he was converted to God. Desiring to consecrate his life, he entered, as a humble lay brother or servitor, the monastery of the bare-footed Carmelites in Paris in 1666, and remained there as cook and servant for the whole sixty years.

Story of Nicholas Herman.

His thoughts of God.

At his feet we may now sit to try and learn what the knowledge of God really means, for in him we see how *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are* (1 Cor. i. 27, 28).

Here are a few of his thoughts that have come down to us, followed by some remarks by his biographer.

How to go to God.

He says: *There needs neither art nor science for going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but for Him, and for His sake.*

We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God.

All things are POSSIBLE *to him that believeth. All things are* EASY *to him*

that hopeth. All things are EASIER *to him that loveth. All things are* EASIEST *to him that practises these three virtues.*

How to converse with God.

To form a habit of conversing with God continually we must at first apply to Him with some diligence, but after a time, we should find His love inwardly incite us to it without difficulty.

How to live with God.

We ought to live with God with the greatest simplicity; speaking to Him frankly and plainly and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen.

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God.

The oratory in the heart.

It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church: we may make an oratory in our heart, wherein to retire from time to time to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love.

When we come to love God, we shall

then also think of Him often; for our hearts will be with our treasure.

"When the appointed times of prayers were passed he found no difference, because he still continued with God, praising and blessing Him, with all his might, so that he passed his life in continual joy; yet hoped that God would give him somewhat to suffer, when he should grow stronger."

"He was never hasty nor loitering; but did each thing in season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit."

"He was lately sent into Burgundy to buy wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him because he was lame and could not go about the bout but by rolling himself over the casks. But he gave himself no uneasiness, for he said to God, it was His business he was about, and that he found it very well performed."

God in business and daily life.

"In the kitchen, having accustomed himself to do everything for the love of God, he found everything easy during fifteen years he had been employed there."

"He was always pleasing himself in every condition by doing little things for the love of God."

"He was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion in retirement."

The kitchen the gate of heaven.

"The time of business does not differ with him from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of his kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, he possessed God in as great tranquillity as if he were on his knees at the blessed Sacrament."

"He began to live as if there were none but God and he in the world."

How to walk before God.

"He walked before God simply in faith with humility and with love; and

he applied himself diligently to do nothing and to think nothing which might displease Him."

"He had an habitual silent and secret conversation of the soul with God, which caused in him so great joys and rapture that he was forced to use means to moderate them."

"He was assured beyond all doubt that his soul had been with God always these thirty years."

How to be always happy.

"He was always happy: all the world suffered; and he who deserved the severest discipline felt joys so continually and so great that he could scarce contain them."

"A week before his death he said, *I hope from God's mercy the favour to see Him within a few days.*"

None can, I think, read these few detached utterances without feeling that they bear a special mark of a close and continual walk with God.

THE SUBLIME IN SUFFERING

I know not what it is to doubt;
My heart is ever gay;
I run no risk, for come what will
Thou always hast Thy way.

I have no cares, O blessed Will!
For all my cares are Thine;
I live in triumph, Lord! for Thou
Hast made Thy triumphs mine.

And when it seems no chance or change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And gaily waits on Thee.

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good.
And unblessed good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will.

F. W. FABER.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUBLIME IN SUFFERING

THE time of adversity, of trial, of sickness has ever been a time of drawing near to God; and yet it is strange how far in reality many great sufferers are from Him. Let us look for a moment at God's school of suffering as described in Rom. v. 2–5. Mark the words: *Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but let us also rejoice in our tribulations;* (crushings to free the grain from the husk, like threshing) *knowing that tribulation worketh* (out) *patience;* (patient endurance) *and patience,*

The school of suffering.

probation: (a proved character, like tempered steel) *and probation, hope: and hope putteth not to shame;* (will not humiliate us) *because the love of God hath been shed abroad* (poured out) *in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.*

An almost impossible injunction.

We first note an almost impossible injunction, that we are to rejoice in the hard lessons set us in God's school in the same way and measure as we rejoice when we look forward to heaven and the glory of God.

Current ideas of conduct in suffering.

It will at once be seen how utterly the conventional Christian standard of right conduct in suffering falls short of this exhortation; for the former at the most enjoins an attitude of patience, submission, and resignation in view of final relief and the joy of heaven by and by.

To be told to rejoice in present suffering and that the joy is of the

same character that will be felt in heaven hereafter is too much for most to understand. Yet all can plainly see the absurdity of talking of being resigned *in hope of the glory of God*, which sounds as unreasonable in most Christian ears as *rejoicing in tribulations*.

Same joy in heaven as in suffering.

St. Paul, for a very definite reason, uses the same word in each case, and we shall never grasp God's idea of suffering until we do too.

Few things show how far our thoughts as Christians are from God's as this passage does, which seems to run absolutely counter to many of our most "pious" and cherished ideas.

There must be some deep-seated reason for such a divergence in our views from Scriptural thought, which is perhaps to be found in our failure to understand the real nature of tribulation. It is not merely, as the etymology of the word in Greek

Our thoughts are not God's thoughts

implies, the freeing of the grain from the husk—which is only the negative side of the process—it is more than this. The positive result is that we are educated by these means in a way impossible by any other method.[1]

I wonder, if we consider the subject for a few moments, whether we shall arrive at any clearer ideas on it.

Various ways of rejoicing.

There are various ways of rejoicing in tribulation.

One way is the result of the personal knowledge of God, so that His wisdom and love are so vividly felt and known in the soul that it is our greatest joy to do His will, and we rejoice in being under His hand, the *tribulation* itself being made sweet to us by reason of

[1] It must not be supposed for a moment that all the lessons of God's school are those of tribulation. The temptations inseparable from prosperity and the discipline of riches are often as hard to learn and to bear to the glory of God as those of adversity or poverty.

the sunshine of God's love *shed abroad* in our hearts. Tribulation can thus become, and I have seen and known it to become, a period of intense enjoyment of the same nature as the enjoyment of heaven (as Rom. v. shows), because the joy in both lies in a conscious nearness to God.

Three qualities of Christians.

True Christians, it seems to me, are of three qualities, which are revealed by the different ways in which tribulations are borne.

The *first* seem made of *lead:* they murmur and repine and find fault with God in trial, even if they do not lose their trust in Him altogether.

Lead, silver, and gold.

The *second* are as *silver:* in tribulation they show patience and resignation, giving no utterance to impatient or rebellious thoughts though often sorely tried, and tempted to do so.

The *third* come forth as *gold:* they rejoice so truly and unaffectedly in their

tribulation that friends who come to pity, stay to learn their secret.

These, even in their sufferings, have hearts *at leisure from themselves, to soothe and sympathise* with others. They do not ask for comforters, but for sharers in their joy. They do not want to be told of the delights of heaven, for in spirit they are in heaven now. They are slow and careful even in praying for relief from their sufferings; feeling it often wiser and better to leave the matter in the hands of the Father they know so well, and trust so fully, whose wisdom is as great as His love.

Character of true scholars.

I have seen these golden ones in trial; and all I can say as a matter of sober personal experience is that the light in which they live is dazzling: they represent, wholly unconsciously—the sublime in suffering.

Gold in the furnace.

One or two things strike me about them. There is a marked absence of

current pious expressions common to tried Christians. There is a naturalness and a simplicity, and a clearly unaffected and unforced joyfulness, that to an ordinary man certainly would seem out of place.

No condolence needed.

You go to see these sufferers, as I have said, prepared to condole with them, to exhort them to a patient trust, and to try and cheer them; and before you have been with them five minutes you are dumb, and know not what to say, and hardly what to think, for you are certainly face to face with a miracle. You see before you the finger of God; with them you are consciously in His presence, and you discern in these sufferers a faith that *does remove mountains*, and calls *things that are not as though they were*. Your little efforts of comfort and little words of sympathy die on your lips in presence of the great joy before you.

Incandescent light in suffering.

It is marvellous, but so simple! Just as a tiny carbon filament, smaller than a hair, can flood a room with incandescent light when in touch with the storage battery, so does the feeblest and least-taught Christian, when in touch with God, illumine all around. But the contact must be real, must be vital.

I will not here say more on this form of rejoicing, though one could write chapters on it, but proceed to speak of another variety.

Trust is not knowledge.

That of which I have spoken depends on the knowledge of God Himself, but upon nothing else. That of which I now speak is the result of a knowledge of His purpose in the suffering; and is not only the result of perfect trust, but of spiritual intelligence. The one often leads to the other. The sufferer who knows his Father, and who cannot, therefore, do less than

Intelligence in God's ways.

trust Him fully, is soon taught more. Suffering God's will and rejoicing in it, he is soon instructed into what he does not ask for—the why and wherefore of these lessons in the school of God.

Attentive study of some wonderful verses in that most marvellous of all epistles, the Ephesians, reveals to us an exalted destiny for which our hymns and current thoughts but little prepare us.

The destiny of Christians.

If we carefully consider the exact language of Eph. i. 4, 6, 10, 12, 18–23; ii. 7; and iii. 10, 11, 20, 21, we can come to no other conclusion than that Christians are predestined throughout eternity, *unto the ages of ages*, to be the exponents to all intelligences and powers in all the universe, of the love and wisdom of Almighty God. When to this we add from the Revelation that our position is to be

Kings and priests.

that of rulers rather than of subjects, we shall understand the difference between our real future and the conventional ideas of Heaven.

Great training for high destinies.

For such a high and holy destiny great training is required, and if earth be indeed the School of God, and not, as some fondly imagine, our home, then our educational training is here and now, and is carried on largely by means of various tribulations.

Now, though a real nearness to God enables us to rejoice in all His dealings without any knowledge of their purpose, it is an added blessing to be able to understand them, and gives a yet deeper tone to our praise.

Sufferings for our own good.

The fact is our sufferings are for our own good, not God's: they are for our sake, not His. It is we who benefit, not He; and we should be very grateful for them. They are to fit us for the future; they are to refine our characters;

to strengthen our trust in God; to give us present experience and reliance in His perfect love and wisdom, so that we may be better exponents of it to others. All this and more is wrapped up in the tribulation; and the moment we see this it alters its aspect and becomes easy to bear.

Story of two nurses.

Some time ago I had two nurses taking care of a very troublesome case, where the patient was most trying. They came to me saying they could not bear it, and must give notice. I pointed out to them that the patient was educating them, and that so far from grumbling, such a training was well worth their paying for. I told them that if they could stand it, they would reap the benefit throughout life —they would be *tempered*, and nothing would be too hard for them again. They saw my meaning, took up the work again from a different point of

view, viz., that of their own education, and from that time they would feel quite disappointed when the patient was sweet-tempered, for there were no lessons that day. They never grumbled, nor even felt "resigned" again.

The standpoint is everything.

The standpoint is all-important in tribulations, and here, then, comes in the value of an intelligent perception of God's dealings. When once we know and realize that the sufferings of earth form part of a complete and comprehensive training for a future so great and glorious that neither language nor thought can comprehend it, they seem, in the language of Scripture, as a *light affliction, which is but for a moment, which worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Thus, though it is true that, without knowing more, some rejoice in suffering, for God can lead His blind children *by a way that they know not,*

The value of true insight.

the *insight* into God's ways of which I have spoken, the understanding of our high and holy calling, alone give to tribulation its true meaning. Some thus *increase in the knowledge of God* (Col. i. 10); though of others it is true that *they that know thy name put their trust in thee* (Psa. ix. 10).

The blessed fruits of tribulation.

Tribulations thus rejoiced in bring their sure and blessed fruits—patience, "tempering," hope, and a heart overflowing with the love of God, which is absolutely poured into it without measure. It seems to me no words can tell how he is to be envied who thus knows God.

The hardness of petty worries.

One point may be touched on here that is perhaps a difficulty to many. They are able, maybe, to rejoice in great afflictions and in tribulations that are of sufficient magnitude to excite the pity of others and to exalt themselves to the rank of real sufferers

But what they find impossible is to rejoice in pin-pricks, in daily worries, in drudgery, in injustices done to them, in neglect (not directly for Christ's sake), in misunderstanding, in slight but continuous physical pain, in little ailments, in bad servants, in small disappointments. It is these that try the Christian's patience: they seem too petty to be called tribulations, and yet tend to produce complaints and sour the temper, and silence praise often more than the deeper waters of suffering.

The defence against small ills.

The resource here has been touched on in earlier chapters. It is to have the heart absolutely garrisoned by God's peace, to take a firmer clasp of the Father's hand, to look up into His face, and let His love be shed abroad over the whole heart, so that it is really carried through and above these minor troubles by the strong vitality and energy of the spiritual life; and all

the time to have the consciousness that, however little meaning these worries have to us, there is not one but can be a blessing and a lesson to us—taken in a spirit resting on God.

Bearing the suffering of others.

There is still another sort of suffering, where the blow does not primarily fall upon oneself at all, but on some loved one: where the husband, wife, mother, father, sister, brother, son or daughter has to bear pain and sorrow. Here God again is the only resource; but the "rejoicing" is not of the same nature. Rom. v. 3 certainly refers to our own tribulations, not to those of others. Here, then, we have the deepest sympathy, and truly *weep with them that weep*; but though we may even in agony bear in sympathy their sufferings, there yet remains a deep peace and calm, from the unquenchable conviction that the true knowledge of God ever brings, that all,

even this, is love, and nothing but love. Even for one's dearest it is possible to say in the deepest waters, "All is well."

But the question may be raised, as to how far this tribulation may include bodily sickness? On this point there is often a sharp divergence of opinion.

Does suffering result from lack of faith?

There are many who see in sickness only the result of lack of faith in God, and consider that the life of Christ *in our mortal bodies* should and will keep us free from all ailments of every sort.

To my knowledge, these extreme views have had truly disastrous results. Humble and trusting Christians afflicted with incurable diseases have had this doctrine pressed upon them, and supported by quotation of the text in Matt. viii. 17—*Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.* Such teaching

takes away all blessing and comfort from the Christian's sick-bed, and brands the sufferer with unbelief, declaring all sickness to be the result of want of faith, and condemns a person for being ill just as much as for sinning.

Evils of the doctrine when unduly pressed.

That this is the reverse of the application of the sentence from Isaiah by the writer of the Gospel is evident when we consider that St. Matthew expressly says that this prophecy was fulfilled there and then—in our Lord's lifetime, and not in His death. There is no reference to any atonement for these sicknesses, which to me is a most unscriptural and incongruous idea. We find the fulfilment of these words in His perfect human sympathy with every sufferer He healed. The same passage (Isa. liii. 4) is quoted by St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 24) in its direct application to sin, not a word being said there about sickness. The two texts show

Christ bore our sicknesses in His life.

that Christ bore our sicknesses and sufferings in His lifetime, our sins in His death.

The logical deduction of this dogmatic teaching is that if a person have faith in Christ disease *must* at once disappear ; if it does not, he has not faith.

Two evils that result.

I have seen two evils, to my knowledge, result—either the sufferer makes an erroneous assertion, or he falls into depths of terrible depression.

1. Many assert they are cured; though the disease still continues. I know a blind man who persists he can really see because he had faith months ago that he was cured. A lady testified at a meeting she had been cured of her deafness for two years, and added, *but it still stays on.* Another was anointed, and told her husband she was healed. Her husband said, *You are no better! No*, she said, *I feel worse; but the Lord has healed me.* Another said, *I am*

healed by faith, not by my senses. A doctor not long since removed a cancer from a woman who actually at the time protested she had been healed days before.

2. Those who cannot rise to these heights—and there are many—fall to corresponding depths.

I remember a case of a Christian man dying of consumption whose last days were much darkened, and who suffered agonies of soul through being told, with much insistence, that his illness was entirely due to his want of faith in Christ. Such instances could be multiplied to any extent.

The health-giving value of true religion.

Having said this, to preserve the balance of truth we must look at the other side of the question. There is no doubt whatever of the health-giving power of inward peace and calm, of the happiness of a knowledge of God, of harmony where there was discord. The

whole being is brought into a state of wholeness, holiness, or health; disease is more easily resisted and recovered from than otherwise.

Tribulation includes sickness.

Personally, I do not think that disease comes so much from lack of faith as it is the result of our carelessness; while, on the other hand, I do believe that it is one of the most valued forms of trial through which the Christian is passed, and in which he is refined and tempered. There are doubtless many other forms of tribulation, but I doubt if there are any so blessed to the soul as this, and I therefore think not only that the "tribulation" includes sickness, but that it forms a large proportion of the whole. It is not sickness that shows lack of faith, but the way in which it is so often borne.

TO THE AGES OF AGES

I go on my way rejoicing,
  Though weary the wilderness road—
I go on my way rejoicing
  In hope of the glory of God.

Then no more in the earthen vessel
  The treasure of God shall be,
But in full and unclouded beauty,
  O Lord, wilt Thou shine through me.

All, all in Thy new creation
  The glory of God shall see;
And the lamp for that light eternal
  The Bride of the Lamb shall be:

A golden lamp in the heavens,
  That all may see and adore
The Lamb who was slain and who liveth,
  Who liveth for evermore.

So I go on my way rejoicing
  That the heavens and earth shall see
His grace, and His glory and beauty,
  In the depth of His love to me."

Hymns of Ter Steegen, Suso, and Others.

VII

TO THE AGES OF AGES

The apotheosis of humanity.

IN this last chapter we will turn away from time, with its schools, its lessons, its failures, and its sins, to that blessed age when the apotheosis of humanity will be reached in a perfect likeness to Christ in heaven.

Let us consider the ultimate calling of the Christian to which I have already alluded, the future life for which we are being trained in the school of suffering—that dazzling prospect in view of which St. Paul so earnestly says: *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk* WORTHY *of the*

vocation wherewith ye are called (Eph. iv. 1).

The most wonderful epistle in the Bible.

Let me ask you to turn with me to that wonderful epistle—to the most amazing words ever written by a human pen—the Epistle to the Ephesians, and contemplate the glorious prospect, the endless vista that it reveals.

Our outlook, physically, depends very much on where we stand. At the bottom of a pit it is bounded by the sides of the pit; at the bottom of a valley it is bounded by the hills around; on a plain it extends, as at sea, some ten miles or more all round the spectator; on a hill this may be increased to twenty or thirty miles; while on a high mountain peak it may extend to one hundred miles or more.

Different horizons.

In the same way men have various spiritual horizons according to their standpoints.

The materialist's horizon.

There is the gross materialist who does not believe in anything beyond the tangible: he does not believe he has got a soul; he believes his mind is a secretion of his brain and the product of a purely material process. He believes that when the breath goes out of the body everything comes to an absolute end. His horizon is bounded by his death: for then he ceases to be.

A more extended view.

Others that we meet know a little more than this. Their horizon is a little more extended, for their standpoint is higher. They believe in a spirit world. They do not know much of what is going to happen in the spirit world, but they believe their souls are going to depart from them, and that they may go perhaps into some one else's body, a sort of re-incarnation. Their minds harbour mysterious fantasies such as the human brain is capable of conceiving, all shrouded in mist. They

can see beyond death a something vague, black, mystical, ghostly, on the other side of the grave.

Christian horizons.

There is another class, that includes perhaps many of us, whose outlook is derived from an imperfect knowledge of Scripture; who believe there is to be a resurrection, and that we are going to heaven. No real Bible student thinks that we go direct to heaven when we die, for the Word of God gives no warrant for the thought. According to the Scriptures, when we die we go to Hades—a place of departed spirits. We do not go to heaven before we get our spiritual bodies, because heaven is a place for bodies as well as spirits, and it is very necessary to understand that.

These, then, believe that there is a resurrection and that they go to heaven; and then they have a bright vision, founded largely on favourite hymns, of sitting there through endless

days singing and chanting, or being employed in other harmless pursuits. That is their horizon.

Millennial horizon.

Others have a wider horizon. They say, "That is not all. When we have been in heaven a short time, then will come the reign of Christ for a thousand years over this earth."

And then comes another class, who say that the Scriptures tell us of something beyond the thousand years, when the Son Himself will be subject to God.

There is yet one more class still, who say, "That is not all, for we know more than that. There is another kingdom after the thousand years of Christ, and after that we shall spend eternity in the new heaven on earth, when God will dwell with men, and where we are going to live and be happy for ever and ever."

The furthest limit outside Ephesians.

Now that is the furthest limit, the utmost of which the human imagination

is capable, guided and enlightened by the Scriptures, *outside* the teaching of the Ephesians.

But the vista which this epistle opens up in the future is a truly awe-inspiring one, one of those sights that appal and astound.

Here, and here alone, we are, as it were, *caught up into paradise and hear unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter* (2 Cor. xii. 4).

Our outlook here is not from any earthly standpoint, but is Divine, and hence illimitable; extending, as I believe, far beyond the furthest vista vouchsafed to St. John in Patmos.

The black depths in the heavens.

There are in the heavens black depths where there are no stars, where the beholder seems to be looking into an infinite distance beyond the universe itself, where one looks through and through into eternity, where no material object meets the eye.

The onlook in Ephesians reminds us of these, and is absolutely appalling in its immensity. But it is extraordinarily definite with regard to our place in the immensity, and has a wonderful interest for us.

I feel certain that few people have even a very small idea of the glorious destiny reserved for those of us of the human race who are in Christ Jesus. And of this the Scripture now before us speaks with absolute clearness; in language that none can mistake.

Nearly one hundred years ago that great divine, Adam Clarke, said of this epistle: *Paul's nervous language seems here to bend and tremble under the weight of the divine ideas which he endeavours to express.* The very words seem almost to give way under the weight that is put upon them, by the thoughts that are in them; so magnificent, so far-reaching is the vista

The words bend under their weight of meaning.

that is spread out here before our eyes.

Grace and Wisdom are Light and Love.

We have spoken already of God as Love, and God as Light or Wisdom; Grace and Wisdom representing Love and Light. Wisdom is God's light applied to our folly; Grace is God's love applied to our need. There is no grace in heaven because there is no need of grace, though there is need of grace on earth. Wisdom in heaven is pure light; on earth it represents light in contrast to darkness. And so we have here to-day the grace and wisdom of God presented to us in relation to our future.

We find that both Grace and Wisdom are what I may call chromatic—of many colours. Light is achromatic—without colour. The Love that is of Heaven is achromatic; the Light that is of Heaven is achromatic; but when either shines through the dense atmosphere of our world of sin and folly it becomes

chromatic, or many-sided, many-coloured. That very word is used in Ephesians with regard to the wisdom of God—where it is called *the manifold* (or chromatic) *wisdom of God.* That is to say, the pure white Light of Heaven is broken up into many colours from its association with human needs.

Manifold or chromatic wisdom.

We will take, then, the Grace of God first, in regard to our position in eternity. The Grace of God is divided in Ephesians into two classes. One of these has reference to our need and is personal, and is called the *riches* of God's grace. The other has reference to our inheritance, and to what God brings us into, and is called the *glory* of God's grace.

The measure of the riches is man and his need; the measure of the glory is God and His Divine dignity and position, and must be something worthy of Him.

The glory of God's grace.

Now you will find the glory of God's grace, of which I am speaking, unfolded first in the Epistle to the Ephesians, i. 10, 18, 19, 21; of which I will just quote a little. St. Paul says in ver. 6 that we are predestined *to the praise of the glory of his grace.* We are going to be absolutely devoted to the praise of the glory of God's grace. We are not that now.

In ver. 10 it says: God has purposed to sum up *all things in Christ—both which are in heaven and which are on earth.* Ver. 12: *To the end that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.* Ver. 18–22: *That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power* (now look closely at the

words at the end of the verse) *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet,* and associated us with Him in that supreme position not only in this age but in that which is to come. Here, then, we get the first sight of the vista of which I spoke.

"Christus Consummator."

Let us look again for one moment at that 10th verse. *To gather together in one* (to sum up) *all things in Christ;* Christ the head of the race—*Christus Consummator,* as Westcott so beautifully put it. Look at the destiny of the Christian man! Observe, it was purposed in God before He commenced the creation of this world, that man, made

as to spirit, in God's likeness originally, should, however sin and Satan may have marred him, yet bear in body as well as spirit the likeness of the Divine, and should be associated with Christ through age after age, Christ being the Head of the whole creation and all being summed up in His Person. And it tells us further in 1 John iii. 2 that we shall be like Christ (*for we shall see him as he is*).

True evolution.

After the entrance of the first germ of life into this world, it was raised by the power of God, through successive stages of evolution[1] to the man into whom God breathed the spirit of life, as He did into no lower animal: the successive steps are described in Genesis i. But here evolution stops and God rests. We reach man, and that seems to be

[1] See Psa. cxxxix. 15, 16, where the evolution of man *in the earth* is spoken of; in vers. 12, 13 it is the individual and his mother.

the last word spoken by God on the development of life on this globe.

Yet now we see it is not the end.

If in Genesis Adam is the *first* man before God, in St. Matthew Christ is to God the *second.* But it is only after an interval of some four thousand years Jesus is born; and in the manger at Bethlehem a Saviour, the God-Man, is brought into our midst. He is made truly man, and brought to the level of our plane of life, *yet without sin.* He lives for thirty-three years in Palestine: then dies.

Functions of a spiritual body.

Now mark, when He is raised again from the dead upon the third day, He is no longer what He was, as far as regards the position of His manhood and condition of His body. He has now a spiritual body—a body that ascends to heaven, a body that can pass through the walls of a closed room without a miracle, a body that is stated

to have flesh and bones, but which has mysterious attributes which render Him strange to His disciples.

Christ not recognised.

On every occasion when they saw Him after His resurrection they did not recognise Him at first. He who had been a man like unto themselves before His resurrection [1] comes immediately unto them, the same Jesus, and yet raised to a higher level as regards the body; and on a completely different spiritual plane.

In this spiritual body He ascends to heaven; and there He has been ever since, at the right hand of God—the crown and glory of evolution and of all life; the Head of all Creation. Life which began at the very bottom of the scale on this globe thus finds its

The Head of all creation.

[1] I have ventured in a previous work, "Another World; or, The Fourth Dimension" (Swan, Sonnenschein & Co.), to call this condition by analogy "the fourth dimension."

apotheosis and last word in the final consummation of the resurrection; in the perfect spiritual form of the glorified Man in heaven.

To that type we are all going to be conformed, and we may look upon ourselves as being on the way, destined to ascend to that last stage. For though we now are men and women of ordinary flesh and blood, we are not going to remain so. When we see Christ we are going to be like Him; we are going to be clothed upon, with the house from heaven, not with a natural body but with a spiritual body, in order that we may be fitted to discharge the high mission and calling reserved for us in the future.[1] Of this calling I will now speak.

Conformed to Christ.

[1] In this connection I would point out the sentence *There shall be no night there* (Rev. xxi. 25), the significance of which is very great, involving as it does the absence of sleep. We often

The riches of God's grace.

We have seen that in the ages to come God is going to show the *glory* of His grace in His inheritance in the saints, and that He has something reserved for Christians, of which He but dimly speaks here, which He calls the *glory* of His inheritance. We shall understand this better as we pass on.

Now in Eph. ii. 7 we are given the other side of the picture, that of the *riches* of God's grace. Look at the close of ver. 7: *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of*

forget that now half our lives are spent with the sister of death. We are practically only half alive in this world, and for many hours each night the whole race lies, as it were, in the semblance of death. The very idea of being without this constant need of sleep is repugnant to us, and a state of perpetual life quite foreign to our thoughts. But this sentence points to such a time when the redeemed race will for the first time enter into *full life*, with all their activities ever at the service of God.

his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

It is very easy, you know, when you come to short words of one syllable, to pass them over without any of the meaning of the language ever getting into our heads. One might as well read the words in Chinese if we do not get any sense out of them.

We shall make known God's love.

Let us consider, then, this verse—*that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.* If the love of God is going to be known to all the intelligences in the different worlds of His vast creation in the ages to come, the exponents of it, whether as regards the riches of God's grace or as regards the glory of God's grace, will be OURSELVES.

Men and women living their every-day lives here have not the slightest conception of the glorious destiny that

is absolutely reserved for them by God. These truths are to their minds as fairy tales, and not even interesting fairy tales, because they do not refer to this world. If they concerned their advancement within the next ten years to some position in London or in the country higher than they enjoy to-day, we should have very eager listeners; but as they are simply truths from God and concern the future, we pass them by, we fail to take them in. But the Bible is called the Word of God (and if it is true in one part it is true in another), and if there are men and women who hold this Word of God in reverence, and believe these words of St. Paul in the Ephesians to be genuine sacred truths of God, let me ask them what these words mean: *that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus?* And

Truths like fairy tales.

also that He is going to display in the ages to come the glory of His inheritance in the saints?

We are to represent God.

We men and women of this earth were chosen by God before the foundation of the world; we were made and selected for one purpose; and if we are put to school to suffer trouble and gain experience it is simply in view of the wonderful destiny which lies before us of being the exponents to principalities and powers and dominions, of which we have no conception at present, of the Love of God. To all those vast heavenly kingdoms spoken of in Ephesians we shall be illustrators, exemplars, and apostles and priests and prophets, of the Love of God, in its glory and in its riches.

We are destined in the ages to come to great honour, as those whom God has chosen to set forth His Love, having known it ourselves so well on

earth. Surely it is because our Divine destiny is so little known that the sublime in suffering is so seldom seen.

I trust, therefore, that this brief consideration of the Christian's glorious future may render more intelligible that mysterious *rejoicing* in Rom. v. 3, and what I said concerning it in the last chapter.

We are to reveal God's wisdom.

But this is not all. In Ephesians we reach another point. We now leave the Love and turn to the Wisdom. Consider Eph. iii. 10, for one moment: *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold* (the many-sided or the chromatic, the various) *wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Well, you say, "That is only in the present." Not so; it is in the future.

Look at the last two verses of this very chapter: *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church* (which, you understand, is the body of Christian people) *by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Or as it may be translated, *unto all the generations of the age of the ages.* To many this is but a pious ascription without particular meaning, so absolutely do we fritter away the force of one of the most deliberate utterances and most sublime passages of Scripture. But it is true—literally true.

To all Eternity.

Whatever glory God will receive throughout Eternity from all the intelligences which He has created will be always through us. I wish we could bear in mind that we are destined, according to His purpose in Christ

Jesus before the world was, to be to the glory of God and to reveal His wisdom and His love to created intelligences throughout the whole Universe.

Glory without end.

Look at the words again. *Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.* To the utmost bounds of time—that is, to all Eternity. Consider that—

> A few more years shall roll,
> A few more seasons come,

a few more tears, a few more sighs, a few more smiles—a little brief day still to be spent in London, in the country, in England or elsewhere, but all of inestimable value in the training and tempering of character, of soul, of spirit, and then all will be over and as "the seen" fades away, the glories of "the unseen" and eternal unroll themselves before our eyes, and we shall reach a

destiny so glorious that the mind staggers when it tries to contemplate it.

We read in Ephesians of principalities, of powers, of kingdoms, of intelligences, of which we have no knowledge. But they are very clear and quite familiar to God, because He knows them as well as He knows us. We see in the Ephesians vistas of time that have no end *unto the utmost bounds of the ages and ages*, on and on unto all eternity.

We are told in the plainest language in the Holy Scriptures, with the authority which they everywhere possess to those who reverence them, that to the ages of ages, to eternity, we are to be the exponents of the glory of God. Nothing short of this, nothing less than this, constitutes our high calling.

We are living pictures of the grace of God.

We are to reveal His love, from planet to planet, from star to star. What a mission! We are reserved to

illustrate the *riches of God's grace* in His kindness to us, and the *glory of God's grace* in the inheritance into which He will bring us.

And not only so, but through us is to be made known the *manifold wisdom of God.* One would have thought that whatever training we might receive we should always remain too foolish to set forth God's wisdom. Not so. We shall be transformed or transfigured into the likeness of our Lord not only as regards the body (being made spiritual, raised to higher powers), but in mind and soul as well; so that we shall be vessels fitted for the Master's use; able to set forth the manifold wisdom of God to those principalities and powers and kingdoms in high places. We get the same thought in a beautiful figure in Revelation of the New Jerusalem. Let us try and realise it for a moment.

The transparent cube.

It is the picture of a translucent cube

1,500 miles in every direction. It lights up the world, for it has *the glory of God, and her light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal* (*i.e.*, like a diamond) (Rev. xxi. 11). The source of the light is stated in ver. 23: *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

The figure of the church.

The picture is significant—*The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*—in the midst of it; and the result is that every ray of the glory of God's love and wisdom that reaches the universe can only do so by being transmitted through this transparent cube, a figure of the entire body of the redeemed people of God. Of course the cube could not transmit the rays of Divine light and love were it not itself as clear as crystal. I am persuaded

that one main object of tribulations is to promote this transparency in us.

There is no doubt that if we grasped to the very smallest extent what the Christian really is, what is his origin, what is his life, what is his destiny, we should consider it the greatest privilege that our mind could conceive, that we should be called the children of God.

Our high calling.

One feels deeply that we think too little of our calling. If we got a grasp of it more firmly, do not imagine for a moment that it would lead to conceit or pride; our destiny is far too high, far too grand, to leave room for ignoble thoughts.

To walk worthy of this great vocation.

You have only to turn again to Eph. iv. 2 to get a real grasp of the attitude of mind to which this glorious destiny leads. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.* [Oh! what lovely words!] *I*

therefore — he is turning from this vista of the ages of ages, this glorious spectacle of Christian men and women expounding God's love and wisdom to the intelligences of those distant worlds to all eternity; turning from it now to practical matters—*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation* (that glorious calling) *wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Could anything be more practical, more beautiful, more lovely? So one need not fear that such lofty and magnificent thoughts of God addressed to us will ever lead to evil. On the contrary, they can do us nothing but good to contemplate.

I think I may here, perhaps, turn

Powers of the world to come.

for a moment to the position in which we find ourselves to-day. There are indications on every side of higher powers gradually coming to light, forces alluded to in Scripture as *the powers of the world to come.*

I believe even now we contain in our minds in embryo, potentialities and powers that have never yet been unfolded, and may never be fully unfolded on earth; these are they which are called in mysterious phrase *the powers of the world to come.*

In the miracles that our Lord wrought He put forth powers that were never used by others, excepting rarely by some of His disciples. These powers may exist in all, and are destined to be employed some day in a future state. Everything that is given to us will be used to the glory of God.

Some of us are groping in the dark,

and yet so feeling the mysteries of the power of mind over mind, and thought over thought, and the influence of one over another, that we almost fear and dread to understand perfectly. It is well that we should feel thus, because I believe that all those influences are comprehended in that mystical expression *the powers of the world to come*, and are not for use in this world at all.[1]

These powers not for use now.

But when the necessity occurs for their use we shall find that they will all expand and flower—when we are transplanted into the Garden of God. We do not blossom out with all our powers now; school children do not use fully developed powers at

We flower in the garden.

[1] The evidence with regard to spiritualism is most definite. I have it on very high authority that the practice of it never raises or improves, but nearly always leads to deterioration of mind or character.

school. They have to occupy their days with study, and learn their lessons well. And that is what we have to do. We have not to spread our wings and show all the powers we have got; but with humble and lowly minds we have to walk with God—to rejoice at what He sends us, and to glory in anything that teaches us another lesson in our course, so that we may be fitted for our high and holy destiny.

Wait, till then!

And if here and there we perceive in ourselves something beyond our understanding, some power which we cannot fully grasp, let us rest content; all will be unfolded and put to full use by God in His own time and way, when we are called hereafter to serve Him as we have never served Him here.

Nor only here
The rich result of all our God doth teach:

His scholars slow at best, until we reach
A nobler sphere.

Then, not till then, our training is complete
And the true life begins, for which He made us meet.
Are children trained
Only that they may reach some higher class,
Only for some few schoolroom years that pass
Till growth is gained?

Is it not rather for the life beyond
To which the Father looks with hopes so fair and fond?
Bold thought, flash on
Into the far depths of eternity
When time shall be a faint star memory
So long, long gone!

Summary.

To sum up, then. Christianity is to know God not by *oida*, or intellectual knowledge only, but far more by *ginosko*, or personal knowledge. This, and this alone, putting us in real touch with the Infinite, fills our souls with light and love, banishes for ever from our lips those words and phrases that are such an opprobrium to Christianity; and in the harmony of daily walking with God frees us from self-seeking;

Result of the knowledge of God.

and with the confidence of well-cared-for children makes us *careful for nothing*, though *in everything giving thanks*. So we *rejoice in the Lord alway*, literally and truly, and are garrisoned all round our hearts with the peace of God, and thus blessed, can care for all and serve all as our Father wills.

The love of God will never cease.

I close with two thoughts contained in two passages of Scripture—one respecting ourselves, and the other respecting God.

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. viii. 38, 39). Ponder well this passage, and say over and over again to yourself, "Never, never, to all eternity,

shall I be separated from the Love of God."

The other sentence I will quote is: *that God may be all in all* (1 Cor. xv. 28). Before there was any creation God was *all*, because there was nothing else. The moment there was a creation God was not *all*, because there was God *and His creation*. But God never rested and never will rest until He is *in all*—that is, until He everywhere pervades His own creation. Our mission throughout eternity is so to make known the love and wisdom of God that He may be not only *all*, but *in all*. He is in *us* now; but we want Him to be in *all;* and I believe God will yet, through us, cause His own wondrous creation to be so filled with the glorious knowledge of His love and wisdom that the mysterious saying will be true, which has never yet been fulfilled, and *God be all and in all*.

The knowledge of God shall yet fill all.

I leave my readers to think over this sentence that so transcends our understanding, and yet in which we can surely foresee the time, when the full knowledge of God shall be completely enjoyed by every created intelligence.

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, PRINTERS, WOKING AND LONDON.

MAY 9 1908

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BT 108

BRENTANO'S
Booksellers & Stationers,

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 014 500 698 3